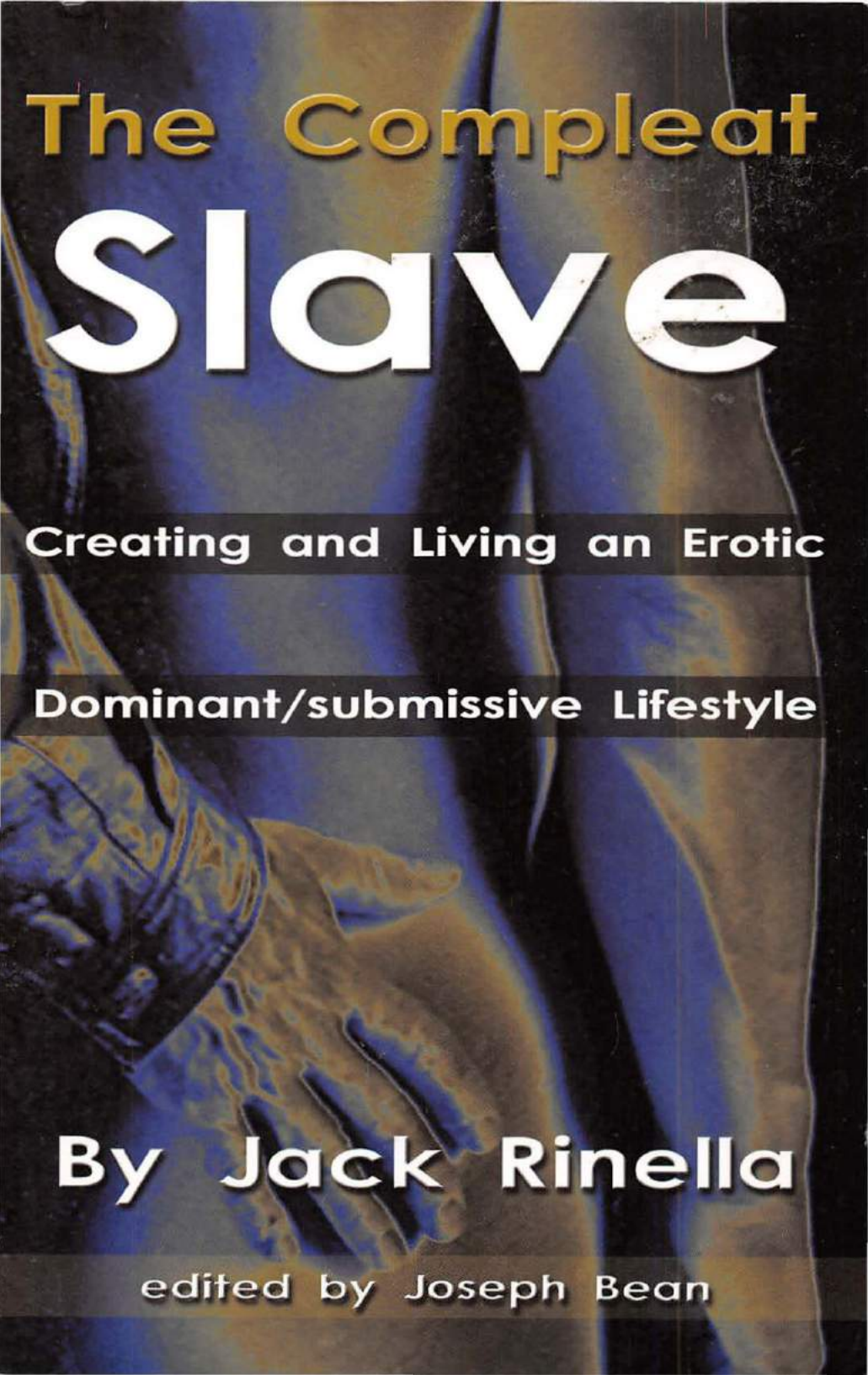




The Compleat Slave

Creating and Living an Erotic

Dominant/submissive Lifestyle

By Jack Rinella

edited by Joseph Bean

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 Daedalus Publishing

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Dedicated to
Patrick Herlihy, my compleat slave,
and in memory of
Richard Spisak
and
Jim Derdzinski.

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Compleat:

Of, or characterized by, a highly developed,
or wide-ranging skill or proficiency.

from *The American Heritage Dictionary*

Acknowledgments

Experience is the best teacher. It's obvious that this book couldn't have been written without my friends and acquaintances, many of whom had no idea that they were helping me write a book. They thought they were being my friends, or looking for a master, or just having a good time with a leather man.

My first thanks go to Lynn Schornick. His example, his quiet affection, his continuing support, and the living of our master/slave relationship added immensely to my knowledge of the subject and the betterment of my life. The years I've spent as his slave and his friend provided much of the "gist" of this book. I am grateful that I know him.

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Patrick Herlihy deserves my highest thanks. Other slaves, slave-wannabes, and bottoms in my life deserve thanks; especially Steve Lewis, Al Erickson, Keith Marran, Dave Marker, and Bobby.

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Friends come and go, and new friends, new seekers, and new applicants do the same. In all of this, life goes on.

Jack Rinella
17 February, 2000

Introduction

First Thoughts About Slavery

The titles of master and slave are bantered about quite freely in leather/fetish/kinky circles. To listen to conversations in bars, clubs, bedrooms, play-rooms and dungeons, one would get the idea that slavery is alive and well among the devotees of leather. That's just not the case.

The relationships I describe in these pages are extremely rare. When they do occur, sadly, they often last for only a short period of time. There just aren't many true slaves in the World. There are far fewer masters.

That doesn't mean there aren't a lot of "wannabes". The countless conversations I referred to above prove my point. The idea of being in a master/slave relationship is intriguing to people. It is a lot of fantastic talk about dreams and ambitions—which are seldom ever achieved.

The compleat slave does exist. One can find such a man or woman here and there. Likewise, there *are* real men and women who are able to master them, to control their slaves completely and happily. It's just that there aren't many of either in the world today.

That last statement requires two qualifications. The first is the fact that, through my education, temperament, and experience, I hold to a very strict interpretation of the words "master and slave" and the relationships they describe. My personal definition is very cut-and-dry. Near-slavery and near-mastery fall short of my definition of "compleat". I'm not saying that my particular definitions make for better relationships; those in relationships of near-mastery and near-slavery may be ecstatically happy and wish for nothing more. But less-than-slavery is not slavery, at least not in the sense I am describing.

Secondly, there are many valid variations of the lifestyle presented here. Part-time slavery, less-than-total control, and personalized definitions about the roles of master and slave are integral to the diversity of the lifestyle, and are very satisfying to those involved. These types of relationships are certainly more prevalent than the strict master/slave relationship I'm describing.

One might think, then, that this book is only remotely useful, since I am describing a rare and difficult lifestyle. Why not cater more to the near-slaves and the part-time masters? Quite frankly, in presenting an "ideal", it's my

intention to bring forth a full range of information which you can take in and apply to your relationships to the extent of your own choosing.

When it comes to relationships, they're all defined by the two (or more) people in them. Validity doesn't come from society's approval or from some external definition of how people should live. Relationships are validated by the participants themselves. How you define your relationships is up to you. *Your* definition is the benchmark with which only you can rate your personal success.

Yes, I personally live out a concisely defined and relatively more strict master/slave relationship than most leather participants do, but that doesn't make it better than one with more flexibility, less control, or less commitment. It is simply *my* ideal, and it's what works for me. The truth of the matter is that all relationships should be right for those involved, with fidelity to self and free choice being the essential starting points.

The Compleat Slave outlines a lifestyle as I see it, as I've lived it, and as I've seen it lived by like-minded others. My experiences are offered here so that you may learn about ideas which could help you define and create the lifestyle you are hoping for.

I write from a gay man's perspective. I entreat my straight and female readers to gently transpose pronouns and organ names to fit their own sexual appetites. The organs may be different, but the techniques are applicable for all genders and orientations.

It's my hope, of course, that reading these pages will motivate you towards deeper submission and service, or towards stronger control, self-confidence, and domination, if that is what you seek. If you finish reading this book with just one or two ideas that make any of your relationships better or more pleasurable, then I will have done something worthwhile.

In this day and age, you can't force someone to be your slave any more than you can force anyone to be your master. Masters and slaves are what they are to each other because they define their relationship and consent (in some way) to that definition. Let me start off with a few thoughts, parameters, and definitions. All of the following ideas are more fully explored in the following pages.

There's no denying that a lot of people think that those of us who are into leather are crazy. To say that our mental health is often questioned is an understatement. But I believe that sanity abounds amongst us.

Get to know leather folk and you'll find us to be intelligent, expressive, self-confident, reasonable people. We do what we do with an understanding of our motives, fully acknowledging the risks, and we continually reap great rewards as a result of our behavior.

We are not normal, but we are sane. We knowingly reject "normalcy" in our quest for self-realization, for satisfaction, for knowledge. We are explor-

ers; leaving the comfort of the “norm” for new and wider vistas of human experience. We are rugged individualists, ready to face the scorn of the masses to better understand ourselves, our environment, our lives.

Leather folk generally begin by emphasizing that our brand of sadomasochism (SM) is safe, sane, and consensual. In his wonderful primer, *Learning the Ropes* (see Appendix for info), Race Bannon adds a very important fourth criteria: **fun**.

Consent is what separates SM from violence, abuse, and destruction. If the sadomasochism isn’t consensual, it’s not ours. The consent of which I write isn’t simply presumed either. Leather folk know that consent is absolutely necessary. We don’t merely presume agreement; we openly discuss it. We know the limits to our play because we have talked about them and we’re committed to adhere to them.

As you’ll see in later chapters, negotiation is an important part of successful SM. It’s the basis for our claim that our activity is consensual. There’s no room for “I thought that would be agreeable” in an SM scene. Instead, we *know* that the activity is consensual because we’ve straightforwardly discussed it as adults; free of coercion, intimidation, deceit or hesitation.

Safety is paramount in this age of AIDS. But here, safety means more than simply guarding against disease. It means that proper techniques must be used for all sorts of SM activities, whether it be safe rope tying, sterile piercing, using “safe” words, remaining emotionally “in check”, and, of course, fucking with a condom. Safe practices are best learned from experts. You can get a lot of information from various forms of literature but there is nothing as helpful as a good teacher.

Among all the reasons there are for engaging in mastery, slavery, or sadomasochism, the most valid and most significant reason is to evoke pleasure. Pleasure is the basis and the purpose of being involved in leather. If you’re not having fun, then there is a problem. If it’s not fun, then don’t do it.

I mean those words. SM is meant to give you and your partners a good time. Your play needs to generate laughter, pleasure, and enjoyment. It’s meant to be relaxing, recreative, and fulfilling. If it’s not, then change it.

If it is dangerous, racist, sexist, or demeaning, don’t do it. In the final analysis, only you and your partner can determine what’s right for you, but you need to be clear that each of you enjoys it. If so, then go for it. That’s what SM is supposed to be about.

Chapter 1

Straight Talk; Explaining Terms

So, what is SM?

It's safe, sane, and consensual activity between two or more persons, it involves various forms of domination and submission, and it generally includes the infliction of intense physical sensations (most commonly **pain**) as a means of experiencing pleasure.

Like all definitions, those words leave a lot to the imagination, and purposely so. SM involves a wide variety of activities and relationships, including such things as role-playing, bondage, whipping, piercing, fucking, verbal abuse, domination, control, servitude, worship, and sex.

Sex? It's amazing to me that I've written this many pages about SM and the word sex has appeared only now. I bet you thought that every page would ooze with sexuality. Well, SM is a great deal more than sex. Though sexual climax can be very much a part of the thrill of good leather, it is only a part.

SM is much more than an activity; it is a lifestyle. Masters rule, slaves serve, and both live in relationships much more complex than the mere manipulation of human genitalia. In fact, one of the first things a slave learns is that a great part of the time is spent in nonsexual activity. A good slave is going to clean, launder, garden, cook, and otherwise serve a master. Significant amounts of one's life will be spent in nonsexual activity such as sleeping, eating, traveling, working, and waiting.

When I decided to write about the compleat slave, I envisioned the lifestyle of two people committed to each other in a deeply intimate and continuing relationship. For all the notoriety our sexual activity earns us, we leather folk still have to live everyday lives. The simple truth is that, in most respects, we are as "normal" as everyone else: finances, careers, schedules, house-keeping, relatives, and concerns of health, family, and education influence us as much as the next person. The difference is that we bring our brand of radical sexuality into other areas of our lives.

Human existence cannot be categorized or compartmentalized into separate and remote little boxes. We are whole people and our humanness is best reflected and lived in a holistic way. The beauty of SM is its ability to free us from the constraints that limit our wholeness.

Our wholeness, too, is relational; that is, we become whole in and through the various relationships that we are able to create and live. Masters and slaves are naturally, and individually, “more” whole because of the relationships they have with each other.

And what is a master? What is a slave? They are persons who relate to each other in a committed relationship, marked by the dominance of one over the other, who has willingly submitted his or her will to the control of the master. What is created is a unity of purpose, desire, and being in which the master has assumed responsibility for the relationship, especially in areas of decision making, authority, and action.

The slave willingly becomes the complement to the master’s will, surrendering his or her own decision-making powers in order to more closely unite him or herself with the master. What they are creating is a special unity of will, desire, and pleasure. Obedience, service, and devotion mark a slave; control, responsibility, and care; a Master.

Though I’m going to use the term “slave” frequently, I do so because there isn’t another word that works. I’m not really writing about slavery; I’m writing about a situation more aptly called “voluntary servitude”.

This slavery isn’t slavery because it is consensual. There are no constraints that bind Master and slave except the ones that they create. Slave contracts have no legal force. The law forbids enforced confinement, the infliction of injury, and the possession of humans in any form.

That doesn’t mean that our slavery isn’t real. Mutual commitment, sincere promises, and deep trust create ties that bind more powerfully, more totally than any chain or cell.

A boy is what he wants to be.

As I begin, I would like to make clear the distinction between “boys” and “slaves.” This is a frequently asked question with an often-misunderstood answer.

A reader once wrote me:

“I really could use your help with a question: what is the difference between a boy and a slave? I’m a Master from Minnesota. I won’t go into all of my likes and desires, but I have been seeking out a slave for service. I believe I have found what I am looking for. However, the above question still seems to come up. I call my partner my “boy”, but he is basically my slave. Unlike many masters that I have met, I love my boy very much and care for him nearly as a lover. But in all aspects, I have control of his life and he serves as I command, and shows respect to me. He often calls himself “the boy” and I like that. But again, it has always been understood that the term ‘the boy’ was really ‘the *slave* boy. I’ve noticed a number of ads in which the guy has proclaimed that he is a *boy* and *not* a slave. Seeing as I am one that uses the terms rather interchangeably, I’m not sure of the difference. I contacted one such applicant and asked him. He said that ‘a boy performs the same as a

slave, but has rights such as being able to refuse.' As a Master who wants a boy to serve me totally and follow my orders, how would that work? And if the boy does follow all your orders as he should and serves well, does that not make him a slave? Maybe I was just trained differently. Could you clarify this for me? Thank you for your time and such. I hope it's not a dumb question. For all I know, the answer has already been written and I just don't know where to look for it. Sincerely, Master Mark."

Mark is facing the problem that all English speakers have to face: our language is often imprecise. Unfortunately, the word "boy" can mean a lot of things and some of the meanings have no semblance to the others! I've met boys who were young, who were old, who were submissive, feisty, subservient, bratty, tops, bottoms, and even some that were female.

For starters, it's important to remember that every relationship is defined by the two people in the relationship. As I said before, there are myriad variations on the theme. In fact, the only right way is the way that is right for both of you.

One couple calling themselves "Master and slave" may choose to live in ways significantly different than another couple who lay claim to the same titles. In a recent conversation with a Master, for instance, we were talking about a slave being a 24/7 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). He noted that his slave didn't work outside the home because he was a 24/7! I know lots of 24/7's and they all work outside the home but obviously his slave doesn't.

Generically, "boy" is used to denote someone in a more submissive role but not everyone who uses the term is going to submit. There are cases of "boys" who dominate their "Dads," for instance.

Specifically, a slave is not a boy, though many masters, myself included, use the term in referring to a slave. I often call Patrick "boy". It is, in this sense, diminutive and affectionate.

When love enters the relationship, as it can and often does, even with Masters and slaves, the relationship may actually take on some of the characteristics of a Daddy-boy relationship.

In its strictest usage, the term "boy" would refer to someone who is in a Daddy-boy, not a Master-slave relationship. Daddies and their boys have unique and not easily-defined relationships; they'd probably be more closely defined as mentoring or friendship, with bonds of mutual affection. The Dad may provide leadership, advice, direction, even financial support, but a boy seldom takes on the role of complete obedience.

In the Daddy-boy relationship, obedience isn't usually expected. Though some Dads may demand obedience and get it, few are so dominant or so lucky.

I think it is this characteristic (obedience) that sets boys apart from slaves, though from relationship to relationship there may be all sorts of areas where the Dad and boy define themselves with a great amount of individuality.

Sexually, for instance, there are no rules that say that a boy can't top the Dad. Other couples may be rather versatile in bed or may entirely eschew SM

in their relationship.

I used to have a boy named Jim. I will admit that I wanted to make him my slave, but he would have none of it, so I settled for being a father figure in his life.

Our relationship was sexual, open, and filled with conversation. Jim often consoled me, ate my cooking, and did the dishes. I gave him advice, mentored him in his career, and listened to his rambling complaints about life.

We spent a lot of social time together, but went our separate ways as well. His Sunday nights, for instance, were reserved for Sidetrack, a local video bar; not for me, even if I really wanted to see him.

I helped him out financially once in a while and he always paid me back. Once or twice, he even offered to help me with a few bucks.

In time, Jim and I grew a bit less intimate but still maintained a close friendship. He never ceased calling me "Dad." Eventually, he fell in love with a guy in San Francisco, and as most boys do to their Dads, left me for his "true love."

Unfortunately, that relationship didn't work out, so the boy called Dad for advice and I did my best to help him via the phone, even offering to help him return to Chicago. Jim, of course, survived the trauma and remained in SF. We stayed in regular in communication until his death in 1996.

I have to admit that it's easier to define a slave's role than a boy's role. To describe a slave, I use these three words: obedience, surrender, and worship. I'm sure there are qualities that describe a boy, but they don't come to mind as easily or succinctly. Usually a boy and Dad relationship is self-defining. If that's not confusing enough, add to it that anyone can adapt any moniker. It's easy enough to say you're a boy, and many will, just because it sounds right to them.

Certainly, a boy is going to be affectionate. I might add; admiring, impulsive, caring, eager, sexy, curious, willing, and intimate. There may be a different degree of versatility and the sexual roles may vary greatly from that of a slave, especially in regards to discipline. Boys have more limits than slaves, to be sure.

If it seems like I'm struggling for words, I am. There are no hard-and-fast rules.

My advice is to know what you want and to be clear about it with others. Don't let ambiguity dissuade you from the kind of relationship you want. Call your slave what you want. What's important is that both of you enjoy the relationship.

Chapter 2

Getting Started

My suggestions on how to get started come from experience. I'm sure there are other suggestions and other ways. Each of us has to get through life as best we can, fumbling perhaps, but trying our darndest to muddle through. If the search seems to be hunt-and-peck, I'd say that's probably not very far from the truth.

I remember the irresistible force that pulled me to explore my sexuality. I remember that I feared I would lose everything, since I was married and soon to be a father. But there was a compulsion in me that wouldn't be satisfied. It wouldn't leave me alone. It kept drawing me to have sex with a man.

Some would call it lust. I know now that it was simply the real me crying to find expression. It was me wanting to live my life in a way that better conforms to the essential, fundamental Jack. I didn't know all that then. It would take years for me to find that level of self-awareness, to become conscious of who I am and how I am meant to be.

I suggest you start on the path to mastery or slavery by reading. It's safe, quiet, inexpensive, and you can do it in whatever small town or big city you find yourself.

If you look in the appendices, you'll find a list of recommended reading.

Next, get yourself a post office box or computer and answer classified ads. A post office box ensures that you'll have a modicum of privacy and, including that address in your own ads makes it easier for others to reply to you.

You can find ads in both print and electronic publications. I usually answer the ones that attract my interest with a short form letter, giving the recipient general information about myself and my expectations. I include my phone number as I'd rather talk on the phone than write, but many people shy away from using the phone at first, in order to protect their privacy.

Be prepared to read a lot of letters, and to answer them as well, without meeting a large number of people. Talk is cheap and there are lots of dreamers who like "erotic fiction" but won't amount to much as partners.

On the other hand, you will meet some people who are really worth your time. You can meet them on neutral territory until you feel comfortable enough

for more seclusion. Tell them that you are new at this, that you need to be discreet, and that you're looking for a few experiences; not a relationship.

Venture into a leather bar the next time you're in a place where that's possible. Buy a gay guidebook if you need help in locating one. Dress lumber-jack casual (jeans, boots of some kind, and a flannel or tee shirt) and you'll be able to nurse a drink all night just watching the scene. You may not get a date, but you will find a way into the leather community.

Don't feel you have to talk to anyone or do anything except observe. On the other hand, if someone strikes your fancy, be quick to respond with a smile, to send him or her a drink, or just walk up and say "Hi."

If you want, you can ask the bartender to help you out. I always like to get to the bar early and talk to the bartender while the place is still empty. That gives me a way to scope out the territory. Having been sociable with the person behind the bar makes it easier to ask him or her for advice later when he's busy. Don't forget to tip generously.

The bartender will be able to put you in contact with local leather clubs as well. They offer seminars and workshops that will give you a lot of information in a safe environment.

Search out the leather mags too: *Leather Journal and Collars*. They'll have ads, ideas, and calendars of events. *The Leather Journal* is definitely pansexual and will have information pertinent to all sexual orientations.

Look for ads and notices advertising a "club night" at a bar, a weekend run, or a contest. It is at events like this that club members are available to tell you about their group and to give you more information on their activities and benefits. It was at a "School for Lower Education" put on by a leather club at the now defunct Mineshaft in New York City that I first saw bondage and pain given with great affection and intensity. It was a night of sights that I still find amazing to this day.

Throughout the year, you'll find leather contests somewhere around the country. The granddaddy of all is the International Mr. Leather Contest (IML), held every Memorial Day Weekend in Chicago (800-545-6753). Between the parties, the contest, the exhibits, and the men and women in leather, this is great opportunity for newcomers to fit in quickly and easily.

Some models and escorts advertise leather services as well. The personals sometimes list ads from Dominatrices—women who dominate men. Their clientele is predominately heterosexual or bisexual, but it's still part of the leather world, far removed as it may be from the gay bar scene. For some reason, there aren't as many men who advertise such services, but there are some. I know one or two guys who have gone this route, but it is a less chosen path.

Paying for it is not generally advised, but it is done, and it could offer a safe and very discreet way to get some experience.

In order to get somewhere in leather, you've got to be willing to peek out of the closet at least a little. I wouldn't worry about being exposed. In leather,

discretion is the better part of valor.

So, check out the various home pages of the leather clubs, or do an internet search under "BDSM". My home page, "<http://www.leatherviews.com>" will point you in the right direction as well.

Wearing leather.

In the summer, I wear sneakers more often than boots, and in the winter, I wear boots more often than other shoes. All that says is, "I'm not a purist when it comes to being into leather." I firmly believe that the real leather experience is between one's ears.

I do, however, have all the paraphernalia that any serious leather person owns: boots, chaps, pants, harnesses, leather cock rings, jocks, vests, a cap, and two different jackets. There are several toys in my collection that are leather as well: a sling, a hood, whips, paddles, and crops. The living room has two leather covered couches, so you can see that however you define leather, I qualify.

That doesn't mean that I always qualify.

The Cell Block is a leather bar here in the Windy City. I was there on a night when the weather was still on the cool side. I checked my coat, bought a beer and began cruising around the then-new establishment. I was walking into the back room when the door man stopped me and said "Jack, you'll need to get your leather jacket to get in."

I asked him what he meant and he told me that he had seen me come in with a leather jacket and that, as I was presently dressed, I wasn't allowed into the back room. It was the first time in a long time that I had been stopped by a "dress code."

Naturally, I retrieved my jacket, put it on, and the rest of the evening went smoothly.

For those of you who've never been past the doorman and into the back room, let me assure you that there's nothing going on in the back that doesn't go on in the front. Rumors of "back room sex" are generally overdone. If all you're wearing is a sweater, don't sweat it. The front bar has very much the same crowd as the back bar.

Then why a dress code?

It is the atmosphere of a place that defines it. Leather bars are such because of the rough and wild ambience lent to them by the decor, the lighting, the videos, and the music lend to the room. What people wear is rightly called part of the decor.

The first leather bars didn't have dress codes. Patrons at those bars would take the uninitiated aside and suggest that, if they wanted to belong, they ought to dress right. In those days, dressing right was limited to boots and a jacket.

Requisite leather, of course, is a relative term. Some places just look for a rough look, others insist on a "major piece of leather" such as a vest, chaps, or

a jacket. Some bars allow customers to get past the code if they are shirtless. That can be a controversial requirement—as many leather folk resent that idea.

Dress codes change. They are definitely a matter of time and place. Whereas once tuxedos were required at the opera, now even jeans are seen. I remember when restaurants had spare sport coats for customers who weren't properly dressed. Those days are long past, except in the rarest of situations.

A local computer bulletin board once had a thread of comments about dress codes. The first comment was from a man who protested the imposition of the code. The largest number of respondents, though, were in favor of the code and advised him to go to other bars where his Lacoste would be more welcome.

Why the fuss? Simply put, *we like leather*. By what we wear, we make statements that help put us into our desired frame of mind and communicate that frame of mind to others.

For some, that frame of mind might be aggressive and controlling, for others it might be slutty, slavish, or selfish. We might want to communicate "Don't fuck with me," or "Take me over the edge, Sir." Leather does something different for each of us.

When I think of the evolution from simple working class attire, a la bikers, to the head-to-toe accouterments seen today, I have to smile. You know, there are times when it really does seem to be just a different kind of drag.

On the other hand, as many in the leather community lament, our dress isn't actually all that dynamic. A guy on a bar stool next to me once complained about how many Twinkies and Yuppies were wearing leather as fashion, not as lifestyle.

That brings us to the whole meaning of leather. Is it only drag, a costume, a way to communicate attitude and desire? Or is "leather" something more meaningful, more basic? Is there a leather lifestyle?

The answer is a very clear "it depends". The answer varies from person to person. What leather means to one individual may be quite different than what it means to the next.

Lifestyle, for either the Saturday night party type or the "into it whole hog" variety, sets the entire leather community apart from the world at large. Marked by individualism, hedonism, and fantasy fulfillment, we really are rebels *with* a cause. But the cause is our own as a movement; it's not some political ideology. Instead, it is an inner curiosity; a desire drawing us together to explore radical sexuality.

Whatever reason you have for donning your leathers is solely yours: for the thrill, the smell, the lust, the feel, the look, the signal, the hunt, or merely out of desire to see what's going on in the back bar. Your attire is your business. What really makes a leatherman or leatherwoman is their outlook.

What is that outlook? Our basic premise is that we can live differently and explore alternative ways of being. We don't want to follow the crowd and we

don't think we have to. Instead we follow our inner selves.

That doesn't negate the fact that clothes send signals. It only means that what really counts is what's going on between our ears.

The Bars: How to break the ice.

One of the recurring questions at Novice Night (a monthly discussion group I used to host) was, "How do you find a person to go home with?" The answer, of course, is that one uses the same people skills in a leather bar that one uses anywhere else: communicate, negotiate, decide, and commit. The language of leather adds a mystique to the activity of cruising that often increases one's apprehension and distress. Black leather can appear as both an attractive cover and a defensive shield. We can spend all night wondering if they are interested in us or not.

"Breaking the ice" is often the most difficult and most important part of cruising. Until we overcome our initial hesitation and begin a conversation, there will be no negotiation, no agreement, and no getting together. But the ice that needs to be broken is within ourselves. It's not the other person who's keeping us away. It's our perception of the other person.

For whatever reason, we're afraid they're not interested in us. We fear the rejection, being made to look foolish. We assume that any answer will be a negative one. We forget that they have the same feelings, motivations, and desires that we have. Give up your assumptions and find the truth. It could be, after all, that they're just waiting, wanting, wishing that you'd say something to them.

Of course, someone will say that they can't break the ice because they're too shy. I understand. No one believes me when I say that I'm just a shy person pretending to be an extrovert! You don't have to be shy. Friendliness never hurt anyone. Go ahead and smile, send him a drink, walk over to him and say, "Hi." There are millions of one liners to start the ball rolling: "What are you up to tonight? What's going on? How are you doing?" Stick out your hand and introduce yourself. Compliment his attire. Ask him a question: "Who's got the key to your lock? Does that whip get much use? Come here much?"

What you say isn't nearly as important as the fact that you say something. Conversation is the prerequisite to getting together. Sooner or later you're going have to talk to the person you want to meet. Make it sooner. There is no rule that says you have to wait until the bar closes to say "Hello." So spice up your conversation with obvious references to what you want to do. Beating around the bush will never get you the beating you're really looking for.

The answers I use may not be the ones you'd use, but they serve as examples. "How am I? Horny." "What am I doing? Looking for trouble." "Do I come here often? Haven't cum here yet!" Let your answers be descriptive and inviting. Or, if you're not interested in continuing the conversation, be polite, but not encouraging.

This is no time to let your preconceptions determine what's going to happen. Is he a top? Bottom? Married? Busy? Looking for love? Experienced? Experimental? Temperamental? Drunk? Drugged? Does he play safe? Is she tired? Irritable? preoccupied? not interested? not interesting? The sooner you realize that every person in a bar is there for the same reason—the reason you're there—the sooner you'll feel comfortable about meeting someone.

How do I know we're all standing there for the same reason? Simple. We all have the same human drive, need, and desire for a social life. We want to be part of the action, to have friends, experience a good time. That may not mean that they're there to get laid, but it does mean you can start up a conversation. And starting up a conversation doesn't commit you (or them) to anything more than a few friendly words.

But if you do get past a few friendly words, then negotiate clearly. And do it while there's still time to make an informed decision. By that I mean, understand the "terms and expectations" of going home with someone before you go home with them. Better to turn them off in a bar than in a bedroom! Learn what your prospective partner wants to do and how well he or she can do it. Establish limits before you crash head on into them.

I once met a friend and fuck-buddy at a local bar. It was really nice to see him again. We chatted, kissed, and I assumed.... As the bar was closing I went to get my coat. He walked toward the door. I assumed he would be waiting for me outside. Instead, when I got there he was walking down the street hand in hand with someone else! Score one for miscommunications! So, I hailed a cab and reminded myself that there's nothing wrong with going home alone. And there isn't.

Respect for others and respect for oneself are necessities. As horny as we may get, the other ought never to become a "piece of meat". Likewise, we ought never allow ourselves to lose our own dignity. We have the right to say "No." Remember the other person has the same right. And saying "No" isn't a put down. It is simply an acknowledgment of taste and time. If you live your life in fear of rejection, afraid to hear "No," you'll never be in a position to hear "Yes."

Bars aren't the only places to meet the love of your life. Classified ads, clubs, bulletin boards, friends, and parties all offer a chance to say "Hi."

Cruising the Classifieds.

Do ads work? They sure do. I "came out" in leather in Fort Wayne, a small Indiana city. There wasn't a leather bar, much less a leather "community" to be found. But there were the ads of *Drummer* magazine and surprisingly enough, I met guys through them. One might think that a man living in Chicago wouldn't go very far to meet another guy, but Gary drove more than three hours away from the Windy City to spend a weekend with me. I had answered his "pup seeks top" ad and the chemistry was right. We corresponded, talked on the phone, and made the fateful date. Almost ten years later, Gary is still one of my

best buddies. I've even got a date with him this Friday!

Ads offer the neophyte the advantages of being a low risk, low profile, low cost investment. We're not all blessed with an apartment on Folsom or Halsted. For most of us, the Village and the Quarter are too far away. But classified cruising is as near as your mail box, as convenient as your phone, or a few mouse clicks away.

Like anything else, answering ads can be a real numbers game. Fewer will reply than you'd like. Second responses are even more scarce. Last summer I answered almost 40 ads, got about 18 responses, corresponded more than once with about ten guys, met three, and felt like it was a lost cause. Win some, lose some.

There's more to the classifieds than filling in the little boxes and sending in your money. A whole language, culture, lifestyle, and artistry are hidden in those pages. There can be magic as well, though quite frankly, it's still human-to-human communication and filled with the same roadblocks that happen in bars, baths and parks, in churches, schools, factories and offices, in fact, wherever two people look each other over.

The Internet provides both blessing and curse to those wishing to enter the world of BDSM. Use those letters in any search engine and you'll find a vast amount of information and misinformation about being kinky. Chat rooms, on-line personals, and their accompanying personal web pages offer everyone from neophyte to old-timer the chance to look and see.

It's cheap, anonymous, exciting, and always available. In cyberspace, you can get your feet wet without ever leaving home. There you'll find literally thousands of leads, potential partners, essays, and illustrations for every fetish imaginable. Keep your expectations within reason, as the great majority of cyber folk are never going to be anything but electronic pen-pals. Real SM is physical, not electronic.

If you're seriously looking, look on the web but be sure to sort through the dregs. You will find gold, but only if you read with a discerning eye. There are lots of pretenders. Be sure to sift fact from fiction.

Be ready, too, for playing the waiting game. Your classified will seem to take forever to appear in print and even longer to get answered. It feels like there's nothing slower than the Post Office, at least when you're waiting for true love!

Finding one's place in the SM crowd isn't an easy task. There's no pat answer to "How can I meet someone?" but there are ways to go about it. The popularity of classifieds proves that more than one of us reads them, searching no doubt, for the perfect top or best boy.

And what about the language of that true love?

There's a whole science to reading the abbreviations. Here goes, Classified Letters 101:

GWM. The first letters in an ad represent the advertiser's status, such as Gay White Male, Bi for bisexual, S for Straight. B stands for Black, A for Asian,

H for Hispanic, F for female. C means couple, and M may mean married. It may be followed by letters indicating hair and eye color, as in Br/Br or Bl/Gr, that is Blonde hair/Green eyes.

But you probably knew those letters. Most people who place ads know what they want and communicate their desire with codes that leave little doubt. That doesn't mean though that there's not wide room for variety in interpretation.

WS: water sports indicate activity with urine, either as a Golden Shower (GS) or as a drink. Another way to state it is to include the word piss or to mention recycled beer.

VA is verbal abuse, profanity, verbal humiliation as in "Suck that cock, you pig." Whole chapters could be written about the pros and cons of this fetish.

SM, of course, is short for Sadoomasochism. In the past it was referred to as S&M. The new, more PC term, recognizes that sadism and masochism are dimensions of the same activity. Actual habits die hard and I most often say "S&M." I'm not always very good at learning new tricks.

BD or B&D is bondage and discipline. They often go together, since once you've got them tied up, it's easier to apply a paddle. Many of those into being spanked prefer to be bound first so that they can struggle and not escape. Others, though, look for bondage as an end itself and do not want accompanying pain. If that is the case with you, don't say B&D, just say bondage. Others, of course, take their "lickings like a man" and don't want to be restrained.

Fr/a and Fr/p refer to oral genital activity in the active or passive mode. Gr refers to anal genital activity. After all, the most likely end to good leather sex is a healthy orgasm.

T stands for torture as in TT for tit torture and CBT for cock and ball torture. Good tit work proves conclusively that the nipples are directly connected to the gonads. It takes a bit of practice, but a well trained tit is a pleasure for everyone. Start slowly and give your nipples regular attention and you will enjoy them for years.

JO is good old-fashioned, safe-sex jacking off.

Wax is hot and dropped from a burning candle. It is quick, short-lived, and usually harmless pain. There is more psychology than heat involved here. It can be fun but make sure you use candles with a low-burning temperature, the cheaper the better (expensive ones use beeswax that burns hotter). Keep the flame high enough from the body not to harm anyone, and drip some on yourself so you know how it will feel. That way you can test for temperature, height, etc. It is a mess to clean up. A bit of baby oil on the skin before applying the wax helps. Shaving the body first makes clean up that much easier.

BB stands for body builder.

FF means fist-fucking. Remember; no glove, no love, indicating that a

rubber glove is safer sex.

LL is leather/Levi. There are also rubber and latex, spandex, and various uniform fetishes as well.

Scat is short for scatology which the dictionary defines as "an obsession with excrement or excretory functions." Not a recommended sport these days, in fact, it never was, but it does happen.

Rim or rimming refers to oral-anal contact.

There are abbreviations that are simply coined on the spot. I ran across one while researching ads for this list: CP. Once a friend told me what it meant, it obviously stood for Corporal Punishment.

So, how do you get started? For anonymity's sake you may want to open up a PO Box. I always like to include that address in my ad, though, for a slight fee, the magazine will give you a forwarding box number to use in lieu of including your address in the ad.

I prefer including phone numbers as well. Even if I don't put it in the ad, I always include it in my first response to the ads I'm answering. Telephones, needless to say, speed up the process. And the inflection of voice adds a great deal to one's ability to communicate. Writing is fine, but I'd rather talk.

You might want to ask for their phone number and block caller ID when you call them if you'd feel safer doing it that way. Also, safety issues can be a bit different for women than for men.

Once you've bought your mag, read through the classifieds with pen in hand. Circle the ones of interest. Don't be too quick to pass over ads slightly different than what you want. None of us can put everything in an ad and he may have left out your fetish simply for lack of room.

On the other hand, if what he wants isn't your idea of a good time, don't waste his time by replying. After all, ads are placed with the hope of finding more than a pen pal.

You may want to keep track of the ads you answer. I use a form letter to reply the first time, then get more personal in the second letter. I encourage the guy to call me, or send me his phone number so I can call him. I'm always skeptical of correspondents who won't give me their number, or who won't call, even if it is collect. I'm suspicious that they're hiding something, or someone, though again, I know that some are concerned about safety issues, and I can respect that too.

Likewise, it's for a good reason that the classifieds often contain a warning about fraud and prison-related rip-offs. But it's not really a problem if you just use a little common sense.

I look for honesty and a sense of openness. If a guy can't be up front with me, if I sense he's not on the up and up, I'd rather not continue the communication.

Happily, the vast majority of people are just out looking for the same good time that you're looking for. Beyond that, there's always the hope of a love affair, that Mr. Benson or his Jamie (the ultimate Master/slave couple

from John Preston's novel, *Mr. Benson*) will write back.

One of the main drawbacks to classifieds in a national publication is that distance can be a problem. If living in the far suburbs makes someone geographically undesirable, imagine how they're going to react if you're seven states away.

On the other hand, we do live in a traveling culture. I met one guy from Chicago via ads and got together with him at a convention in Las Vegas. Turns out we were both going to the same meeting so we split the cost of a room.

When I was living in Indiana, I corresponded with a guy in Texas. We met in California! Classifieds make it seem like a really small world.

I always send a picture with my first reply. I have a stack of them handy for just such an occasion. It's not a nude shot, but it shows me as a real person. If a guy's going to be turned off by my looks, it'd best be sooner than later.

Lying about oneself will only bring disappointment. Be truthful with your statistics. If you're not his type, that's a reflection on his tastes, not on you. Keep looking and be clear about the person for whom you're looking.

Before he shows up, settle on the particulars of when and how he's arriving and what you'll do. Maybe you're going to pick him up at the airport. Maybe he needs directions on how to drive to your front door. Talk about who's going to pay for food, travel, and accommodations. Know his expectations and make sure he knows yours. When is he going to leave? Are your tastes and pocketbooks fairly well matched? Can you afford what he expects and vice versa?

A popular strategy for meeting the first time is to choose a public venue such as a coffee shop or bar. Some players, just before going to meet a prospective partner, will tell a friend, giving them appropriate information, to ensure that if something goes wrong, they will be quickly missed. You can call the friend when you know everything is OK. It's just a little insurance and it certainly doesn't hurt.

Make plans, but be flexible. That's how you'll have the most fun. If the scene doesn't work out (and not all of them do), have alternatives. There was one guy who drove five hours to meet me. As it turned out, he wasn't really into what I wanted. After ten minutes in bed, it was obvious that we were going nowhere.

So I turned the weekend into a real tourist event with dinner and a movie and some sight-seeing. We both had a real good time too. Not what we expected, but not a disaster either.

Yet, even the best-made plans go astray. I corresponded with a guy from the East who wanted to be kidnapped. I agreed to kidnap him at the Fort Wayne Airport!

As soon as we met, I walked him to my car and handcuffed him then and there. After a short ride home, I blindfolded him inside my front door and led

him to my dungeon. I had my captive for the weekend!

But I had to go on an errand for a bit. When I returned, I made him a prisoner's supper of bread, water, and cold beans, and brought it to him in the dungeon. He was gone. In his place was a note: "It's the duty of every prisoner to escape. Thanks for the good time."

And I hope you have a good time too.

Chapter 3

Playing Like Adults

There's broad variety in the intensity and manner of leather play. Some dabble with a bit of lighthearted bondage and a little ass-slapping. On the other end of the SM spectrum, there are those who use long, single-tailed whips and (consensually) draw blood. Most players fall somewhere in the large bell curve that makes up the middle.

The term R&P, for restraint and pleasure, is probably a better term for describing the games people play than is the more drastic label of S&M. In any case, no matter what your place in the lifestyle may be, adulthood is necessary for the best results.

This past week, I got three separate messages which are indicative of the need to play responsibly. I received a letter from the Gay Male SM Activists of New York, a phone call from David in North Carolina, and a message on my machine from my friend Bob who lives here in Chicago.

Included in my monthly mailing about upcoming GMSMA meetings was a short one-piece flyer warning me (and everyone else on the mailing list) about a top in New York City who doesn't respect limits and is accused of causing harm to his sexual partners. I can't give you all the details, but it suffices to say that this organization thought him enough of a threat to publicly acknowledge his activity and warn its members not to associate with him.

His description would match that of most tops in any leather bar, but the flyer went on to say that local bartenders would be alerted so that they could point him out to anyone needing further clarification, in hopes of deterring him from harming others.

Looking out for one another is a consistent concern within our community. The leaflet about this guy was specific, but the message it contained was general enough for all of us: know with whom you are playing. I'll grant that I've gone home with more strangers than my Mother could ever worry about, but I feel I've always done it in a way that was responsible.

There are lots of ways to determine if a person is safe or not. It is your responsibility to do the legwork needed to protect yourself. When in doubt, ask, and if you don't get reassuring answers, go home alone. You can always get a person's phone number and meet them later. A person who won't share

a phone number may be hiding more than you need to know, or they may simply be cautious. Here, you'll have to use your own adult judgment.

David is a married man who travels for a living. He read my book *The Master's Manual*, looked up my phone number, and has called to talk about his concerns regarding leather on several occasions. He likes the advice I give him and so he continues to call. He's brand new and only a sporadic player in the scene. We've never met.

His recent phone call to me brought up a recurring issue; as a submissive, how should one respond to his "master's" demands? My answer was, as straightforwardly as possible. Be honest.

Like many married men, he can't get the domination he seeks in his life from his wife, so he looks elsewhere. He's just begun to explore what leather means to him. On my suggestion, he answered a few ads and met a guy that he's now seen a few times.

He wants to be a slave to this guy but finds that the master he has met is moving too fast for his tastes. He likes the guy but isn't ready to give as totally to this man as the master wishes. It's not that he wouldn't want to get there eventually. Rather, he wants to feel his way through this brand new leather experience.

Understandably, he has a lot to sort out: his sexuality, his marriage, his family responsibilities, his new and erotic relationship. In many ways, he is in the midst of a very traumatic coming-out process. I cannot predict where it will take him, but I can agree with his deeply felt need to take it more slowly than his master desires.

There are master/slave relationships that are totally one-sided in terms of control, but they are neither newly-formed, nor of an occasional occurrence. David, brand new in the scene, and without experience or self-confidence, is in no position to jeopardize his permanent family relationships or to be the kind of slave he's not ready to be.

My advice was to meet the guy again but, before starting another scene, tell him that they need to talk seriously, and as adults, about limits, fantasies, and reality. In short, David should approach his partner not as a submissive or as a slave, but as an adult. They need to negotiate in a responsible manner, and delineate exactly what the two of them could and couldn't do.

I advised him to be humble and respectful, but to make himself absolutely clear. It would be better to end the relationship than to continue playing in ways that were unacceptable to one or the other of the partners.

I'm a firm believer that submissives can't abrogate their responsibility. Master or slave, each is supposed to be a reasonable, consenting adult. Neither ought to give up on creating a satisfactory relationship. I will admit that there are relationships where the submissive can and should abrogate all self-will, but I condone it only when that relationship is mutually and fully agreed upon by both parties, without coercion or deceit. I'm all in favor of total

obedience, but that occurs only on the fringes of the bell curve. Most SM is still R&P (Restraint and Pleasure)!

The third recent indication of the need to play responsibly came in the form of a disturbing message on my answering machine. It seems that my friend Bob and a friend agreed to do a cigar-burning scene where the top would burn Bob. I don't know the circumstances of the agreement, but it was negotiated and they played it out.

The next morning Bob was angry to see that he had been badly burned and perhaps scarred for life. The cigar-imposed marks were extremely painful. What might have been a good scene last night was now a really bad one.

In this situation, both top and bottom needed to be more responsible in their respective decisions. I would suggest that their negotiation wasn't explicit enough. Did Bob know there would be scars the next morning? Did the top really want to make permanent alterations to Bob's flesh? When two people agree to a scene they need to know exactly what they're agreeing to. Bob's regrets could have been avoided with just two minutes more of negotiation, or just one minute more of exploration about the effects of playing with cigars.

Regrets are such bad feelings. That's another reason to negotiate responsibly. Once again, I have no problem with a master marking or even scarring a slave for life, but it is probably not appropriate to do it as part of a one time, one-night scene.

In fact, it may be that the master thought he was doing exactly what Bob wanted. If such is the case, he should have been thoroughly sure. In this negotiation, verbal clues such as "I'm going to really mark you," would have told Bob what he was in for. It's at that point, too, that Bob would have had the opportunity to say "stop."

This is certainly a case for mutual responsibility. Perhaps Bob should now say something to his master about that night so that they both can learn from the incident. Bad-mouthing the master to others would not be productive. The unfortunate incident was co-created. Each must bear his fair share of blame.

I suspect that the burns on Bob's skin will go away in time. I imagine that the lesson will stay with him for much longer.

I once had a scene with a guy who chose to handcuff my wrists behind me and then had me lie on the cuffs. In time, the circulation to my hands was cut off and they fell asleep. I was playing "tough", and so delayed my very appropriate request to be put in a new position. I waited too long to ask.

The result was that my hands were still numb five days later. Eventually, my body restored itself to its natural state, but I was worried for a time. Now, one might criticize the top for not checking my circulation but, in retrospect, I doubt he was as competent as I assumed.

On the other hand, my foolish bravado in not saying something sooner was my own doing. I really only had myself to blame for the numbness in my

hands. I should have been responsible enough to speak up. It just boils down to the fact that we are each responsible for our own actions and we each have to separately bear the consequences.

When we get into the flow and the excitement of the scene, our emotions can overpower our reason. As responsible adults, either as top or bottom, we will be better off if we know with whom we are playing and what we are doing. It's better to end a scene than to wake up with regrets.

But, when there are regrets, it's an excellent chance to consider exactly what you did wrong and learn from it. It's easy to blame the other guy. Whether you're top or bottom, be an adult. Your scenes will be more fun in the moment and the next morning as well.

How to Negotiate Scenes.

The quest to find the perfect partner, or at least the one who will do for tonight, seems endless. Tips on techniques, on classified advertising, on dress codes, and safe sex are all helpful. A lot of ingredients go into "a good time," but eventually, it all depends upon our ability to negotiate. If you're a good communicator elsewhere, those same skills are invaluable in your negotiations of scenes. Leather is just like life in microcosm.

Wherever two people communicate, there arises the possibility that a sexual encounter will occur. What may not be apparent is that turning a possibility into a reality takes negotiation.

For the sake of discussion, negotiation can be broken into six stages: early signals, discovery, initial agreement, fine tuning, commitment, and ongoing communication.

The intensity of the final "commitment" determines the degree to which negotiation is necessary, as well as how detailed it needs be. Quickies have been "negotiated" without words in a matter of seconds. Arriving at an agreement for a long-term relationship may take months, if not years, and, as any long-term lovers will tell you, it's never really over.

Negotiation continues throughout the life span of a relationship.

EARLY SIGNALS

First impressions can be overcome but, truthfully, to do so can be difficult. We tell books by their cover. We interpret signs, gestures, and words within the context of the encounter with them and the framework of meaning they imply to us. My column on dressing for success (*Drummer*, issue # 167) covered much of what I call the early signals for cruising.

The initial encounter establishes a framework for future negotiation. It sets broad guidelines and the basis for a relationship. Any time two people relate to each other, be it checking out groceries or getting fisted, they are in a relationship. So, take the word "relationship" to mean the way you are going to treat to each other and the intensity and duration of that treatment.

Early on, the two of you are going to have to decide who's top? Who's

bottom? Are we switchable, undecided, available? That communication, of course, doesn't all have to be verbal, or even in person. Three different guys recently wrote to me in the hope that I'd become their master.

The first said something like, "I hope you're not offended if I say I'd like to be your slave." The second left only vague clues about his intentions but made it very clear that he was an experienced submissive without a master and that he'd like to talk to me about his (very hot) experiences with his last master. The ensuing five pages made my dick drip with anticipation about having this guy's naked ass in my playroom. He never asked, but even a cursory reading between the lines made his dreams clear to me.

The third gentleman was quite forthright. "But ultimately, my goal is to give myself up to YOU as a total gift," he wrote.

All three included phone numbers and so, the negotiation, complete with early signals of where they wanted to go, could begin. Likewise, I had sent early signals in my column on slavery and so the stage was set for the next level of discussion.

DISCOVERY

Letter writing may be the easiest way to negotiate but it takes the longest and can be devastatingly futile. Face-to-face negotiation, on the other hand, gives rather quick results, especially since much of what each partner desires is all too often found in the "packaging" rather than the substance of the potential partner. You can't always tell if he's ugly in a letter. If beauty is your sole criterion, then there may not be much opportunity to negotiate anyway!

This second stage entails the discovery of general parameters, such as willingness, availability, and experience level. The conversation doesn't even sound like negotiation, and indeed, it doesn't have to. Instead, it is just a simple matter of fact finding. What is important is that you find the facts necessary to make an informed decision.

Is he single, or at least available? Is she interested in doing anything? What is her time frame? Now, later, never? What are his interests, his fetishes, his turn-ons and turn-offs? Is he new to the scene or an old pro?

Discovery is not meant to be a forty question quiz. It is simply a time to get to know each other as individuals. If you take time to do that, you'll help avoid serious misunderstanding later. The old question about "going home with a maniac" is easily answered: Get to know the person well enough to know that's he's not a maniac, then go home with him.

Don't get me wrong, I've had my share of quick, anonymous sex, but treating your prospective partner as a person, getting to know him as he really is, will make any later activity more pleasurable.

Your line of discovery depends on your goals as well as whatever "standard" questions you might have. The questions your new friend asks will tell you volumes about him as well.

Don't rush discovery. Sure, you may want to get your rocks off right now,

but it is better to go home alone or wait another day for the right partner, than to find yourself in a situation you'll regret. Issues of health and safety are important enough to take priority over fast, sexual relief. If all of your "negotiation" is taking place after the bartender has yelled, "Last call," then you are beginning the process too late in the night.

There's nothing wrong with giving the guy your phone number and continuing the discovery in a less rushed, less frantic time. On the other hand, if you both feel you know enough to go on to "Go", then do so.

INITIAL AGREEMENT

If you've come to this point, it's because you've found common grounds of agreement throughout the time of discovery. By now, you ought to feel that you are right for each other, within the context of the scene that you are considering. The time and extent of initial agreement, like the rest of the process, is determined by the expected outcome. For short term relationships ("Quickies"), initial agreement may simply mean saying yes to "doing it" (whatever "it" is in this discussion) right now.

On the other hand, you may find yourself in somewhat of a loop between discovery and initial agreement; getting a small "yes," gathering more information, then getting more approval.

Be careful to see what your partner is really saying. "No" may not really mean no. It may just mean "not now," or, "maybe, but I need more information."

Where are his answers coming from? Does he still have fear or hesitation? Why? What hasn't been communicated properly?

The guy who wrote "give myself up to YOU as a total gift," isn't willing to fly here to meet me. He's still uncomfortable with his knowledge of what's going to happen. He doesn't feel right about buying that airplane ticket. If I want to continue the dialogue toward his eventual slavery to me, then I need to get agreement to continue the discovery process.

Likewise, he needs to have me agree to continue listening and learning. And so, we go back to discovery, moving ourselves closer to knowing whether or not we'll ever get together.

There comes a point, of course, when there's been enough talk, enough writing, enough cruising. It may be that it's never going to work out, or that the conclusion is so obvious that you might as well get naked right now!

There's nothing wrong with saying "no." There is nothing wrong with hearing "No" either. Each of us, top or bottom, has the ultimate right to decide when, where, and what we do with our bodies. Exercising your right to say no is no different than saying yes. It is your free choice. If it's not your free choice, then you need to examine what is really going on, and why isn't it a free choice?

I'm a strong believer that "no" should be said in a friendly, polite, caring, and clear way. It should not be taken personally.

Just because the man you're negotiating with says no doesn't make you any less of a person. Saying "no" to him doesn't mean you are putting him down or rejecting his worth. That is so important to realize, I'm going to write it again: There's nothing wrong with saying "no." There's nothing wrong with you if someone says "no" to you either.

You may want to find out, if possible, *why* the answer is "No," especially if you find it disheartening or surprising. It may just be what is more real and most honest for both of you. Look at it as a learning experience; take from it what you might, and move ahead to other opportunities.

If, on the other hand, you're getting Yesses, then go on to the next step. You're almost ready to get laid.

FINE TUNING

Almost. I said almost.

Some of the obvious details may have been worked out by now. You may even know a great deal about when and where and what, with whom. Fine tuning is meant to fill in the blank spaces, especially those concerning safety, health, and limits.

In more formal negotiations, such as when Mr. Wonderful is flying from Florida for the love of his life, I put things in writing and ask my future partner to do the same. In writing? Yes, in writing. Things like plane arrival times and flight numbers are important enough to be put in writing.

Maybe I take my writing too seriously, but I like to let the guy know what to expect, what to bring, and what to do. I think things like what clothing will be necessary, who's going to pay for food, and medical considerations are significant, though they may not all have the same level of significance.

The heavier master/slave scenarios demand more careful preparation. Communicate to each other what your expectations are. By doing so, you're less likely to be disappointed. If you expect him to show up wearing a jock strap that has a week's worth of piss stains in it, let him know! If you need to take medication four times a day, inform your host that such is the case. After all, he'll need to leave a hole in the saran wrap mummification so you can take your pills—as well as to let you breathe!

Like the rest of negotiating, the depth and breadth of fine tuning depends upon the intensity, duration, and kind of scene you're anticipating. You don't need to bring a change of clothes if your "love affair" is only going to last thirty-seven minutes. I don't give guys I pick up at the bar on one of my occasional "prowl nights" a written statement of intent.

Whether your scene lasts ten minutes or ten years, you do need to fine tune the information about health issues. Regardless of your state of health, it is important that both of you are clear as to safe sex and that you are both responsible to ensure that safe sex occurs. Neither top nor bottom can shrug this responsibility on to the other. Be informed.

I am strongly opposed to rejecting people based on their health status.

Yes, I play with men who are HIV positive — and have lots of safe fun with them to boot. HIV status, though, is only one of many health considerations. “Who’s got the condoms?” is another. Fine tune the details before you find yourself in a position where you wish you had known sooner.

COMMITMENT

Having followed the preceding steps in a natural, easygoing, honest and open way, the rest of negotiation is a snap. You know whom and what you’re getting and when. It’s time to just do it.

That is, it’s time to just do it if it is a reasonable and emotionally sound decision. Listen to the red flags your inner self sends up, if there are any. Be sure that what you’re up to is safe, sane, and consensual. Recognize that you’re making an adult decision, arrived at soberly, carefully, and respectfully of self and others, and then do it.

Getting the commitment may be as easy as asking, “My place or yours?” Or it may be something much more formal. It may be as dominant as “On your knees, boy,” or as submissive as dropping to your knees. How clear cut it needs to be depends on what has transpired to this point. Fact is, though, if you’ve gotten this far, then you’re home free. It’s just a matter of knowing whether it’s his home or yours.

ONGOING COMMUNICATION

One might think that getting bedded, bound, laid, sucked, served, or any of the other variations two people might come up with, would be the end of the negotiating process. But it’s not.

Relationships are entities unto themselves. You will continue to discover new facts about your partner and new facets of his or her personality. There will be a need for further fine tuning, for clearing up misinformation, for sharing new fantasies. New facts will continuously alter your possibilities and so negotiation, to keep both of you where each of you wants to be, will need to continue.

Don’t be afraid to renegotiate. If the red flags fly in your face, respond to them. Listen to your inner self, however softly it may be speaking.

That doesn’t mean that all new information is negative or that all new feelings will be foreboding. You may find, as many have, that what began as that quick encounter, evolves into the love of your life. Make all your relationships work by being open, honest, reasonable, and emotionally sound.

Remember to have fun. That’s the only reason to be negotiating in the first place.

Chapter 4

Proper Slave Training

Young men often have the best questions. Last week's phone call from Lou is a case in point. He wanted to know if I would supervise his entrance into the leather scene. In the short run, he wanted me to train him to be a slave.

As the conversation continued, though, he said that his long term plans were to be a master. OK, Lou, start "at the bottom" and work your way to the top. Ah, such enjoyable requests I get!

The first discussion with any prospective partner entails a great deal of mutual exploration. Since this was a phone conversation, there were questions about appearance, as well as all sorts of queries about past experience, present relationships, motivations, passions, health status, availability, etc. The idea is for each of us to understand what the other wants.

That's not always an easy task. We stumble over the meaning of words and their impact on our ideas. What is Lou's definition of the word "slave"? What does he mean when he calls me Sir? And do I mean what he means?

The concept of "proper slave training," for instance, is open to a broad range of interpretations. For most leather folk, training is no more than a euphemism for rough sex. When the guy says he wants a training session, he's saying he wants to play with you. Nothing more, nothing less.

Those sessions might hold some small amount of learning, but that education is only peripheral to the purpose of the play, which is simply to have fun.

For those just entering the leather scene, or those who have specific goals, training may mean a lot more. Novices, just beginning their foray into this mysterious subculture of leather, look for training in order to learn our customs and our codes, to gain an appreciation of what we do and how we do it. Such training is usually easily found by asking questions and reading a few books. Watching the action at a leather bar can be an education in itself, especially if you're standing next to someone who can fill in the details for you.

There is, too, the opportunity to get an education at the occasional seminar or demonstration offered by a bar or club. Attending one of these is an excellent way to learn the ropes, so to speak.

This kind of “training” will help inform a person in the ways and why’s of leather, but it still falls short of proper slave training. No two people are going to define slavery, mastery, and “proper” in the same way. For one, slave training may involve endurance testing and limits pushing in order to bring the slave into an ever deeper experience of pain. For others, it may be lessons in cock sucking, cunt licking, massage, or self-control.

I generally start my “training” differently. I see a proper attitude as the most important asset a slave can have. That being the case, I first teach a boy to say “Sir” often, in fact, at the beginning or end of almost every sentence he speaks. From there, my instructions include a myriad of requirements meant to transform the trainee into a proper slave.

Knowing how to keep the condo clean, play with my tits, make coffee, or strip upon entering my presence are all lessons that need to be learned. Those lessons, of course, are determined by my definition of what it means to be a slave.

Other masters have other requirements based on their expectations. In fact, proper slave training is a completely relative term, based on the master’s and the slave’s fantasy life concerning the relationship. What’s proper for one couple might be seen as very inappropriate by another.

An excellent example of this involves sex. Male masters usually expect that their slaves will bring them to orgasm. Sex is very much part of the master/slave scenario among gay men. Professional Dominatrices, on the other hand, often refrain from, and forbid any sexual contact with their male slaves. What’s proper in one leather relationship is forbidden in another.

The kind of training Lou’s going to get, then, is totally dependent upon the person he chooses to train him. It is important to bear in mind that it is his decision. Training will only begin and continue as long as the student is willing to learn from the teacher.

God knows, I’ve had scores of men, and even a few women, ask me to “train” them. Most generally, I’ve been willing to do so, only to have the trainee last for no more than one session. Sometimes the first session ends before it even gets started. Reality has a way of deflating fantasy with great speed. What wannabes think they want to experience and what they actually do experience can be worlds apart.

I’ll never forget the young man who asked me to teach him to be a leather master. After our first sexual encounter, he decided that his leather career was over. Such an experience is not unusual.

When we commit ourselves to real learning, we never know what the lessons will bring. Finding out that you aren’t a leather man can be just as important as learning to be one. After all, not everyone has desires and passions that match mine or, for that matter, yours. It’s like the guy who wanted to fulfill my every fantasy until he found out what my fantasies were. Needless to say, I never heard from him again.

I think that’s unfortunate. We’re not going to attain our goals by quick

decisions and short-term efforts. Proper slave training takes time. It takes time to sort out the expectations from the realities, to communicate real, honest desires, and to negotiate truly satisfying relationships.

I have a real desire to help people become permanent members of the D/S community. That doesn't happen in a one night stand.

So, if you're serious about being a leather man or woman, find someone with whom you can talk. See if you share a common image of mastery and slavery. Find out if the chemistry is right for you to have the kind of sharing it takes to become a master or slave, a top or bottom. Communicate. Negotiate. Then, all things being right, commit yourself to the training needed to make your fantasies real.

Wary Applicants and Patience

In the Summer of 1996, I began a rather intensive search for a slave. In the flurry of activity, I was keeping track of more than twenty guys. Either I had answered their ads, or they had answered mine. In several circumstances, they called me about finding a master, and I spent time talking to them about it.

In the final analysis, except for making a few new friends, nothing substantial came of it. By the middle of September, correspondence from all of them, mostly conducted via phone and e-mail, ceased. I went on vacation, got busy with classes, and settled into a hectic Fall schedule. Once again, I was disappointed to be without that special man of my own.

That's life, isn't it? I suppose that each of the applicants had their own reasons for giving up their side of the negotiation, but alas, one seldom knows why the communication stops. I understand how that happens. There are lots of guys I've heard from only once or twice, then never again.

I enjoyed talking with several of these men. One or two held high promise of being the "right one." Being loathe to just give up, I sent the most promising applicants a short piece of e-mail asking why they hadn't kept up their communications.

Though several have failed to answer, there were three replies: one guy was busy traveling for his job.

The second, Paul, got distracted: "Sir," he wrote, "I don't know what to say. I haven't talked to you in a long time and I feel guilty about that. Basically, I have been doing the same stuff as usual — going to school, working, etc. I STILL feel guilty about the whole slave thing. I thought honestly that I was ready to follow through with it during our first set of conversations.

"I definitely want to talk about it, if it is OK with you, but if you feel like I treated you badly by not keeping in touch, I understand that... Thank you for getting in touch again."

The third wrote, "Sir, sorry for not responding to your e-mails for quite a long time. My slave soul has been at rest, fallen into deep sleep. I suffer from those fluctuations. There are times when I step back from my desires, when I

am scared of the mere idea of being a slave, of living as a slave for the rest of my life. I hate these ups and downs, but what can I do about it?"

What can "he" do about it? What can I do about it? After all, I'm the one looking for the slave. It's my fantasy that goes unfulfilled.

Seriously, though, I think there are two things to do about "it". The first is to keep talking. As long as there is a dialogue going on, the chance remains that the situation will resolve itself. That idea is much broader than a mere slave search, too. It goes for all sorts of human interactions. "Don't give up" is still the best strategy for success.

Now, if you want to give up because you have found a reason to do so, that is another case. I would hope that the conversation would be ended harmoniously. That's just good manners. Tell me you have other options that you want to pursue, tell me what I did "wrong", or tell me why it isn't going to work and so you're giving up the negotiations.

I hope that isn't too much to ask.

The young man who "has these fluctuations" asks a valid question. Too many of us get cold feet when it comes to our deepest desires. I think most of us are stuck in ruts of our own creation. We tolerate conditions we dislike because inertia is such a comfortable thing, change is so disconcerting.

Most of us languish with unrealized fantasies because we can't bring ourselves to get from here to there. The stretch appears too far. What we want seems so distant, so difficult to get to, so overwhelming in its conclusion, and requires so much to do to achieve it, that we never arrive. There's nothing leather-bound about that either. Creating takes time and effort. Accomplishment is not handed to us on a platter. In most endeavors, we have to take it one step at a time.

My lover, Michael and I are in the midst of a rather large project. We're building a dungeon in his basement. When completed, I think it will be the best adult play room you'll ever see: cages, a sling, glory holes, a bondage box, two crosses, saw horses, video, stereo, mood lighting, even a sink and a small refrigerator.

But it takes time to build a room like that. Time to plan, to order, to carry, cut, nail, wire, plaster, hammer, screw, and paint. It'll take several trips to the hardware store and lumber yard. Original plans will change. We'll make mistakes and we'll have to redo things. There will be cuts and scratches and weary arms.

It's no different when you build a relationship. The secret is to keep building it.

Peter, the boy who asked the question, is in a time period when the fantasy of his own slavery has "fallen into deep sleep. I suffer from those fluctuations." My suspicion is that he has to retreat from the process because it seems so impossible, so difficult for him to accomplish.

I know Paul had those misgivings early on. He wanted my assurance that, as a slave, he would be allowed to pursue his career. "Of course," I assured

him. How else would he be able to pay his share of our living expenses?

How can you do what seems impossible? How can you tackle the insurmountable? How can you eat a whole elephant? In each case, it is a matter of one step (or bite) at a time. Take your fantasy and break it down into logical steps, achievable goals. Instead of agonizing over moving across the country or leaving your family forever, imagine the simple, attainable things you can do right now to bring yourself forward.

Don't pack up your furniture or quit your job. Instead, make a date to meet the guy. Don't worry about the next seventeen years of service, consider what the next three days might hold.

I'm negotiating (aren't I always?) with a guy here in the mid-West. His idea of getting ready for a master is to lift weights (a very good idea) and to open his ass daily with a large dildo (an OK idea, but of dubious merit). I would suggest doing the things that simplify one's life: get rid of the junk in the closets, pay off debt, save a nest egg so you can afford what it takes to make the move.

Even if your desires are nowhere as drastic as cross-country slavery, there are little things you can do towards your goal that are manageable. Make a list of those mini-projects and attack them, not all at once, but one at a time.

It's important to see accomplishment more as a process and less as a result. Keep the process going and the results will take care of themselves. Stop the process and you'll be where you are for a long time, and I can't even write "a *good* long time."

How I Found My Slave.

I woke up this morning before the alarm went off. It must have been before 6:00 AM since only a grayish light was seeping through the drawn shades. No matter, my cock was making its desire known. I'm too old for piss hard-ons to mean much anymore, but it doesn't stop the morning's elevated testosterone level from getting me going.

I yelled for Patrick to get his ass into the bedroom. He replied, after I had shouted three times to wake him up, "Yes, SIR."

As he entered my bedroom, I pulled off the sheets and quilt, telling him to "Take care of this." His mouth went slowly and worshipfully, as he's been trained, to my prick. In five minutes, he had gotten me off, was sent back to bed, and I fell back to sleep. Being a master has its advantages, to be sure.

Getting a slave is no easy matter. Anyone who has looked for a slave or for a master, soon realizes that each is a rare find. Oh, there are scores of wannabes, but few people have the courage, or the desire, to allow their fantasies to become reality. That's not to say there aren't a lot of dominants and submissives out there who dream of slavery from one side or another. There are.

What is lacking is the slave's will to live that lifestyle without retaining some sort of control, without setting limits and conditions, without keeping

some part of themselves to themselves. Likewise, wannabe masters often settle for less than everything, preferring a submissive some of the time, rather than continuing their search for a slave who will serve them all of the time.

But, hey, I wanted a slave. I wanted to see just how far, how real, how complete mastery could be. It's in my nature to be an explorer. What better frontier to search than that of leather?

The first man to become my slave lived in the same apartment building as I. After dinner one night, we began talking about SM. He was willing to try it with me. So, some sixteen years ago, we took a copy of Mr. Benson and began to live it. I showed him my first list of rules, took him into the bedroom to fuck, and our experiment was begun. A year later, it had become too intense for both of us and we agreed to become lovers. He's still one of my best friends, but it's been a long time since slavery was part of our relationship.

In the Winter of 1992, I wrote a column called "What Santa Can Bring Me for Christmas," explaining my desire for "my own slave boy, one that fits the 'best boy' description to a tee: an obedient masochist who can cook, clean, and do laundry. He should need little sleep but a lot of sex, and have enough of his own income that I don't have to support him. Of course, I'd like him to be younger, better built, and more intelligent than the usual Saturday night trick. That, dear Mr. Claus, is what I really want. And I don't just want him for Christmas. I'd like to keep and enjoy him for a lot longer than just through the end of December. I want him for life!"

Before the column made it into print, I met Keith in a bar. Handsome, 21 year old Keith, who said, "Sir, I would really like to serve you." You see, Virginia, there really is a Santa Claus. That relationship lasted a wonderful (but quick) four months. I guess it was a case of easy come, easy go.

Enough old history. From then on, I kept an eye on the ads and a desire to find that slave for life. It was no easy search, even for someone like myself who has all the right opportunities.

In the Fall of 1993, I received three letters from men who wanted to be my slave. Each of them had been attracted to me by a column about slavery that I had written in Drummer magazine.

Bobby, a thirty-nine year old from Pensacola, Florida, was one of the men. His first letter said that he wanted to serve a man just like me and he hoped that I would contact him about doing so. That very night, I picked up the phone and called, leaving a message on his answering machine. He was amazed that I did so and returned my call that same evening. We talked for a while, spending the time asking each other questions about looks, submission, sadomasochism, and "What are you like?" I was impressed by his answers.

Bobby wasn't going to move very quickly. In November, 1993, I got a short letter: "I am sorry it has been a while since you've heard from me. Sir, I was finding myself in a state of constant sexual arousal. All I could think about, Sir, was being in your service. Sir, you cast quite a 'spell', and all without the benefit, Sir, of us even meeting (yet, Sir?). To be honest, Sir, the

whole situation scared (scares) me.

"Reading your article, Sir, in the most recent *Drummer*... reinvigorated my heart and soul in knowing, Sir, that you are the one I would choose (if chosen, Sir) to serve totally."

I was hot to trot with Bobby and wanted to meet him as soon as possible. His job as a real estate broker and apartment manager made it difficult for him to come to Chicago. I suggested we meet in New Orleans. Bobby was very agreeable to that, but he failed to return phone calls, and didn't call when planned.

In the early Spring of 1994, I got a postcard from him. He was in New Orleans and "wished I was there." That would have been nice, but he hadn't invited me! The postcard went on to say that he would call soon.

Some two months went by and he still hadn't called, so I called him, once again surprising him, since he had concluded that I had given up on acquiring him. He resumed his correspondence with me and we talked on the phone once in a while. The more we talked, the more I became convinced that he would make a fine slave.

In August of 1994, he wrote: "Mea culpa, mea culpa... I am so sorry I have not gotten back with you much sooner... I think of you often and you remain the most serious and therefore, realistic potential master I have ever communicated with... One of the items I have yet to resolve that keeps me from relocating is my financial situation... Oh well, Sir, I am sorry I haven't kept up with you better... Please forgive and consider writing and or calling me again. Yours to do with as you see fit, Bobby."

His next letter actually spoke of coming to Chicago to meet me. Of course, this was after more than a year of letters and phone calls. So it was that, in September of 1994, he actually showed up and spent a long weekend with me. We got along quite well. My feelings about the appropriateness of owning him were correct.

In the meantime, he had begun to straighten out his finances, and relocation now seemed possible. By Sunday, I was ready to invite him back for a longer stay.

The Sunday night of his first visit, I took him to Master Lynn's home for dinner. After all, any slave I would acquire would have to fit into the family, i.e., both Lynn and Mike would have to approve of him. After dinner, Lynn thanked me for bringing him dessert and instructed me to tie Bobby to the St. Andrew's Cross in the basement. I was to do the dishes. As I cleaned up the kitchen, Lynn whipped Bobby. I could hear the sound of leather on flesh and Bobby's responses. It sounded hot. In due time, I joined them for the fun. Obviously, Lynn approved of Bobby.

I was more than ever ready to make him mine. The next morning, on the way to the airport, I asked him his reactions to his trip, expecting him to want to return as soon as possible. Instead, he responded with hesitation. I pushed for clarity only to have him answer that he was planning on going to Seattle to

meet another master! OK, put Bobby back on hold.

Several days later, I got a letter from Bobby in which he revealed the truth to me: without wanting to upset me, he really thought he wanted to be Lynn's slave. In November, Bobby returned to Chicago to spend time with Lynn. That trip was the basis for his next letter: "I am just as confused now as I was after I left your place on my first trip to Chicago. I continue to be 100% convinced that I want/need to spend the rest of my life as a slave, but I do not feel any closer to knowing where. I am very glad Master Lynn suggested I come for another visit, probably in January.

"One more thing I have been meaning to tell you.... I know the decision to become someone's slave is a two-sided decision between potential master and slave... the last free decision the slave makes... but knowledge that a master wants me, thinks I would be trainable, suitable, and usable is going to be a major part of my decision to offer myself as a slave.

"When you were driving me to the airport and you asked me what was next, I was taken aback, so I answered, 'Well I guess I'll go to Seattle and see what happens...' When I asked you what you would like to be next and you said you would like to have me schedule an extended visit, I was shocked. I don't know why, but too shocked to respond logically."

Bobby came North again in December and stayed with me, though he did spend some time with Lynn as well. Lynn and I both wanted to own Bobby, and he was willing to be owned by either of us. He couldn't decide between us. Since he was choosing slavery, I suggested that he let his future master make the decision. That was very agreeable to him.

It was easy for me to defer to Lynn's desire in this situation and we quickly agreed that Bobby would become Lynn's property. I would remain as number one slave and Bobby would be required to serve me as he would Lynn.

All the way around, it was the best of worlds: Lynn got himself another slave; I had a boy to play with, and to assume many of my domestic duties at Lynn's; and Bobby was blessed with not one but two men to serve.

In February, Bobby came North for a job interview and to visit Lynn. On March 5th, he arrived with all his possessions to assume his longed-for position of slave. Our family had finally grown to four. Now the search for number five could commence in earnest.

During the Summer of 1995, for instance, I answered a slew of classifieds, probably more than forty, either from the back of *Drummer* magazine, in *Tough Customers*, or in *Metropolitan Slave*. Occasionally, I'd get a response to an ad I had placed here or there. I especially searched the master/slave registry on the Metroslave computer bulletin board.

It seemed to me that I was presenting an excellent opportunity. Most applicants, though, thought otherwise. I could only guess why so few continued negotiations long enough to even come for a visit. I thought that I might be too intense, too demanding, not financially secure enough. It was obvious

that many were deterred by my multiple relationships. They couldn't handle the fact that I had both a master, Lynn, and a lover, Michael.

Invariably though, the conversations and correspondence seemed to boil down to replies like this one: "The minute I saw the outside of the letter, I recognized your name. I did not know why until I read your letter and you identified yourself as, among other things, the erotic fiction [sic] writer that I constantly see in magazines that I buy. I am excited just writing this letter. I live on erotic fiction.... Unfortunately, I cannot permanently leave the Fort Lauderdale area. I also feel that I am not the slave for you as I am not ready to commit totally to being a slave."

For the most part, life was well with me. On most accounts, I should have been satisfied with two committed relationships and a slave to use when I wanted. There were frequent hot encounters with part-time and one-time submissives. My career was doing well, my finances were a struggle but improving, and I was surrounded by a supportive leather family.

I wanted more. I wanted to own a slave. My search had its ebb and flow, times of intense activity, times when I was too busy, too frustrated, or just distracted. But I never gave up on it. Sometimes, I approached it with renewed zeal, sometimes it became an exercise in futility. If nothing else, I sometimes rationalized, I was collecting data for my next book.

I kept the correspondence I received. During a three month period, for instance, twenty-one men replied. Twenty-one men "disappeared." That is, after a few pieces of mail or a couple of phone conversations, the dialogue ended. I know a few of the reasons. I can guess at a few others, but mostly, it simply stopped.

My conclusion is that fantasy is fun and most live on "erotic fiction." I suspect that too much correspondence wears down the probabilities. My friend Jim in Arizona suggested that meeting sooner, rather than later, is the best strategy. I agree. Pressing real flesh and sizing each other up face to face, answers a hell of a lot more questions than anything you get from a long distance dialogue.

In December of 1995, I almost gave up looking, though not completely. It was the next month that Patrick came to me. It happened this way:

Bobby suggested that he would write an ad for me. "Are you ready?" it began. Patrick was. He sent me a one page letter, complete with two photos and the plea that I give him a chance: "Part of me wants to gush with excitement," he wrote, "over having the opportunity to respond to your ad in *Metropolitan Slave*. The serious side reminds me that, though you are deserving of it, you probably get that often enough as it is, and your ad was placed with more serious matters in mind. My intentions, too, are serious.

"Sir, I am applying for the position of slave. I am a masculine, gay, white male, with a compact 160 lbs., 5'8", average, in shape, 40 year old, moderately hairy body. I have a tight ass, uncut cock, brown balding hair when it isn't shaved, deep expectant brown eyes, and a small but hungry mouth. A stable

and balanced individual, I am submissive, a bit on the quiet and shy side, eager to please, and emotionally mature, with both feet (size 8) planted firmly on the ground.

"Sir, I am looking for a full-time, permanent master who will use me, train, and appreciate owning a moderately experienced slave. I do not seek a lover or a Daddy, though master may choose to fill those roles. I do not seek to waste time, and though I am ready and available, I well realize the seriousness of the decisions involved. I begin this process honestly and carefully, and with great respect for the man who will be considering me. In time, a firm, caring hand can take this quality wannabe and make me into the devoted slave I wish to become.

"Sir, this slave has experience in the more basic SM activities but understands that a master has the right to use a slave he owns (as opposed to a slave that makes itself available for occasional use) in whatever manner he chooses once trust is established. I know I have it in me to commit to a life of slavery. Not too long ago, I uprooted myself to become the permanent slave to a master. I left a career, friends, and places with which I was familiar, only to find that it was for naught four months later. Though we parted amicably, I now find myself having to choose between re-establishing myself in everyday life or continuing on, staying loose and flexible in the hope of finding that place where I think I truly belong, at the feet of the right master. As long as my finances permit, I must choose to continue my search...

"Sir, you can reach me at the above address and this phone number... I know you will be discreet. I will be staying at my brother's for the Holidays and for a time afterwards before making a trip to Ohio to deal with some personal business. I will have the time to swing over to Chicago for a more personal interview should you be interested."

Patrick, it seems, had just ended four months of slavery in Lubbock, Texas, but that's another story. Living with his brother in a Southern city, unemployed, and fully convinced that slavery would make him happy, he only asked for the chance to prove himself.

I picked up the phone and called him.

He would be in Ohio next week. "Could I come to Chicago to meet you, Sir?" he asked. It was quick and to the point, but I took the chance.

"Call me from Ohio," I answered, "and we'll see." In a week's time, Patrick was at my door. He called me from Ohio, wanting to see me the next day. It wasn't my usual style. I would have preferred to have had several investigative phone calls. There was a lot of ground to cover: my other relationships, his sincerity, the issues of intensity, pain, finances, and health. Instead, there were no long discussions, no extended question and answer correspondence. We both knew what we wanted and were going to settle for nothing less.

He arrived, then, on Thursday, just in time to join me for a car ride to Lynn's. On the way, I did my best to fill him in on what he could expect and how Lynn, Michael, and Bobby fit into my life.

His five day trial period earned him an invitation to return. About a month later, he did just that. His second stay of eleven days earned him a metal collar locked on for good.

He then returned to his brother's, packed his stuff, and moved in to serve as my slave. The day he arrived I had him sign a contract and we celebrated a commitment ceremony privately:

"I hereby accept the submission of your person and yourself to my mastery. By this instrument, I agree to direct, train, and dominate you as I wish. Your servitude will continue for a period of one year, beginning on the day of the signing of this agreement and ending on February 7, 1997.

"Your slavery may be renewed at my discretion.

"It is agreed that this period of slavery will be under my direction and control and will be subject to the following conditions:

"I desire that virtue be a significant part of our relationship. Therefore, we agree that fundamental to your slavery will be the practice of the virtues of trust, honesty, openness, loyalty, and obedience. Without the practice of these virtues in your relationship to me as master, there can be no true slavery. Their practice therefore is expected and required at all times.

"You wish to be an integral part of my leather family and will treat each person in that relationship with the respect, honor, and obedience due their position. You will give special deference to Master Lynn and to my lover, Michael, treating both of them as you would me.

"You wish to bring me physical, sexual, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual pleasure by the submission and service of your self to my will.

"You want to be trained to do the above without failure, without rebellion, and without hesitation.

"For the period of your slavery, I will control your schedule, your work, and your finances.

"You recognize that I am your master/lord and that my cock is the object of your obedience and worship.

"We acknowledge that this agreement binds us as master and slave, dedicated to the accomplishment of our goals. This relationship will in no way prohibit the maintenance or development of relationships with others, except that, for the duration of your slavery, you will make the attainment of the goals herein described your first priority and the conduct of your slavery, in light of these goals, will take precedence, when such precedence is required, over other relationships, goals, and activities.

"You will restrict your sexual activity to me and to those with whom I assent, on an individual basis, to your having sexual activity.

"By your agreement to this document, you give me the right to transfer the duties, rights, and obligations of this agreement to any person at any time for the duration of this agreement. Those persons to whom I transfer these rights by gift, rental, or sale, shall be deemed holding the rights of this agreement in my place and shall receive the same respect, service, and obedience as

due me.

“By my signature and my sealing, I accept you as my slave.

[I signed here.]

“I, Patrick, willingly submit myself to the above described slavery, commit myself to the herein described goals, and accept Jack Rinella as my master for the duration of this slavery. By my signature and sealing, I accept you as my master.” [He signed here.]

So, how did I get myself a real slave? I decided what I wanted and looked for it. I looked a lot, leaving no stone unturned. I asked others for suggestions about how my search might be improved. I answered questions truthfully and often volunteered information that might help the applicant decide sooner rather than later.

I chose to keep looking, but tried my best to relax during the search. I held no expectations about the outcome with any specific person, believing strongly that someone, somewhere would eventually be the right fit.

Most importantly, I think, I played the numbers game, answering ads, buying ads, looking in the bars, on the bulletin boards, and generally letting it be known that I was looking.

Strategically, I was what I was looking for: ready. I was tired of fiction, tired of the pretense, and would do whatever it took to get what I wanted.

It wasn't quick or easy, but the slave mouth around my cock proves to me that it was well worth the search.

Chapter 5

The Master

Confidence Makes a Master.

The confidence that a master has to wield extends further than to the end of a whip. Certainly, the admission that one is a sadist and has the right to enjoy sadistic activity is part of a master's character. Sadism, though, is only one of the ways that dominance is exercised, albeit a noticeable one.

Confidence shows itself in one's ability to do what one likes, to order others to do one's bidding, and to enjoy the results of one's control over others. By culture and ethics, we often feel that to allow others to serve us is somehow wrong. It takes ownership of one's mastery to sit back while another obeys.

Our natural, or at least *cultural* bias is to help others in their chores. Even guests often feel the compunction to help with the dishes, so to speak. To let a slave prepare, serve, and attend to all the duties of a good dinner and then to walk away from the table as he cleans up the mess takes courage and the belief that one has the right to be served, especially when it's done night after night.

We're not talking about sharing duties. We're talking about having a slave work for you. There's no fifty-fifty stuff in this relationship. Instead, there is a strict hierarchy of authority, enforced by whatever means the master desires.

Bobby recently commented that I didn't look like a 38 year old. (I'm not.) I failed to see the humor in his words and told him so. The next time he said that, I grabbed a paddle and punished him. The other night at dinner, Lynn didn't like Bobby's attitude so he simply told me to "give Bobby five good ones" on a "cold" ass. There was no prep to the punishment, no building up to the pain. I didn't use a crop or belt. I just went at him with my clothes brush (reserved for punishment only). You get my point: the master-slave relationship is authoritarian. The master has to be able to be an authority.

Although there's always a place for civility, manners are different between master and slave. There is no need to reciprocate. Lynn and I often have Bobby satisfy our sexual needs while the slave boy, who has taken care of us, is made to go unrequited. Those are Lynn's testicles that Bobby carries and

they will be milked for his master's pleasure, not his own.

It's not our job to please our slave. It is his job to please us. It takes confidence to live the dictum that the only reason for a slave to be in his master's presence is for the pleasure of the master.

Yes, slaves have benefits as well, though one might be hard pressed to call blue balls a benefit. Bobby, though, enjoys the feelings that heightened sexual awareness give him. Going days, even more than a week, without an orgasm energizes Bobby and makes him feel more productive.

Sadistic behavior has its rewards for both master and masochist. Inflicting pain, reddening a butt, and leaving marks are the owner's prerogative. A master has to have the confidence to speak in exactly those terms. He has to be able to see his slave as property, chattel, a mere toy. Inflicting pain is one way to "take ownership," though it is by no means the only one.

An interesting note to this is that if a slave isn't used, he or she tends to become resentful. As *Metropolitan Slave* publisher Jeb says, "more slaves leave their masters because they weren't beaten enough than leave because they were beaten too much."

Ownership is what makes the relationship work. The slave has freely and fully given him or herself to the master. The master has confidence that the gift is complete and that he has the right to enjoy the gift in whatever way he wishes.

Lynn, Bobby, and I went to the Eagle (a Chicago leather bar) last Saturday night. There were no convenient parking spaces, so Bobby was instructed to drop us off and find a parking space. After our socializing was done, Bobby was told to go get the car for us. Without hesitation, Bobby knew that his slavery meant it was his master's pleasure to use him as a chauffeur. Like I said, there's more to slaving than sex and sadism. That fact is what separates tops and bottoms from masters and slaves. Yes, the two or three hour play time that we all enjoy is the rule rather than the exception. Relationships such as the ones that Lynn, Mike, Bobby, and I share are unique to say the least. There are a lot of qualities that make our leather family "work," not the least of which is Lynn's steadfast authority that stems from the indisputable fact that he believes in himself.

Indecision, hesitation, and doubt can be covered up (for a short time anyway) in a "play scene", but not in real life.

And therein lies the surprise. One might get the idea that Michael is weak. That is the furthest thing from the truth. Instead, he is strong, determined, and steadfast. He has a successful professional career, a beautiful home, a closely committed relationship, and financial stability.

He is a master at work, a bottom at play. He's no slave, but his love and trust allow him to give himself as fully as he wants, which happily is just what I like. You see, this confidence stuff works two ways. Slaves and bottoms need to be confident as well, both in their ability to serve and their master's ability to rule.

So, we come back to the beginning. Confidence is necessary for any human relationship to work. The more trust there is, the more the relationship can deepen, intensify, and satisfy.

How do you get confidence? There's a topic for another book!

Marks of a Master.

Bobby's butt is red this morning from the beating he so well enjoyed two nights ago. Those, however, aren't the kind of marks I'm addressing in this chapter.

I've spent more than several hours recently interviewing a number of slave applicants. Each of them has had a bad experience with a previous master but has decided to pursue his fantasy of "being owned". I put the nature of the fantasy in quotes because it's too soon to tell what their fantasies really involve. I've spoken to JB three or four times, to Giles once, and to Peter once. Each of them was brought to my attention by Jeb of *Metropolitan Slave* and his master/slave brokering endeavor.

Several other men have discussed their surrendering to me as well, but these three men have expressed serious and rather uncompromising desires to become slaves. Peter and Giles are both over fifty, JB in his mid thirties. Each is willing to relocate. They have varying degrees of SM experience. Those characteristics are a good start, but from an initial telephone meeting to the final commitment of long-term servitude, the distance can be very long.

That distance isn't covered in one or two conversations, not even in one or two meetings. It is not taken lightly, quickly, or in one movement, but rather in a series of calculated, reasonable, and small steps. As I told each of them, it's like eating an elephant—one bite at a time.

The similarities among these three men are amazing. Each of them recounted a "bad" experience. For Peter, it meant a jail sentence. For JB, it got him into more than \$9,000 worth of debt. Giles got off easily, though it could have cost him his life if his "master," a young man of no experience, hadn't realized the imminent danger, come to his senses, and ceased the violent activity against his bound and gagged submissive.

It's no wonder then that these guys are skittish and ask all sorts of questions to ascertain my trustworthiness. Trustworthiness, of course, is the first and most important "mark" of a master. The others, in no special order, are self-control, consistency, common sense, and confidence.

My friend Joanne adds to that list; "empathy, compassion, knowledge, and appropriate levels of skill." In any case, you get the idea; just because someone *calls* himself a master doesn't make it so.

As I've written repeatedly, *trust* is the basis of any sadomasochistic relationship. That shouldn't be surprising, as trust is integral to the success of *any* relationship. But when the guy has you blindfolded, gagged, and trussed spread eagle on a St. Andrew's cross, you'd better be sure he can be trusted.

Determining a person's trustworthiness isn't as hard as one might think. I'm serious when I talk about references, though there are other easier methods.

Ask questions that are probing and personal; even too personal. How does the guy react to being asked about his personal life, his family, his friends, his other relationships? Look for signs of secretiveness, vague answers, even deception. See if she is a loner, standoffish, or smug. What may appear as "elitism" may in fact be a way of hiding something.

Are there inconsistencies or ambiguities? Are there marks of stability? Does he have a permanent address? An ordered life? Are there qualities that indicate restlessness, covert activity, or irresponsibility? Look for signs of real maturity: success at work and at relationships, acceptance by others, involvement in the community.

That leads to the second essential quality: consistency. Inner stability reflects itself in an outer reality that is steady and predictable without being boring. Yes, I'm full of surprises. My friends are always curious as to what's going to happen next. But I'm consistent in my dealings with people, in the way I live, and in what I expect. The rules I set for my slaves are based on clear and well-enumerated principles.

You don't want a partner, either as master or slave or somewhere in between, who flies off the handle, changes course without rhyme or reason, or who leaves you wondering what the Hell is going to happen next.

Masters need first to be able to control themselves. Indeed, Peter and JB got themselves into trouble because they were in relationships tainted by drugs and drug-related activity. Addiction is the enemy of good-living, and that is especially true when the life is filled with SM. Additionally, you're not going to find a Master who can control his slave unless he or she can first control him or herself.

It's not that a master is without emotion. All of us experience grief, anger, joy, and a multitude of emotional forces that shift our focus and our activity. What the person *does* in the light of such feelings is more important. I'll punish a slave who angers me, but I won't punish him when I'm angry. Therein lies the difference between the mark of a master and that of someone to whom you ought not surrender.

Another mark of a good master is common sense. There's no one I know who spends more time thinking, planning, negotiating, writing, and living fantasies than I. More than one person has marveled at how lucky I am, how filled with realized fantasies my life is. But each of those fantasies is based in reality. After all, most of our lives are spent *not* in slings, cages, or black leather harnesses. Our days are spent working, our nights sleeping, and most of the rest of time we're doing chores!

I spent this weekend with Lynn's sex slave Bobby. Of the past 24 hours, only about five minutes were spent having sex. So much for the dream world of leather. Realized fantasies have more to do with the real than the imagined.

I'm all in favor of a boy having his feet in the air on occasion, but when they are, the master's had better be firmly planted on Mother Earth. I may choose one of these three applicants, but the choice will only come after we've made some hard decisions about employment, health insurance, safe-sex, living conditions, finances, and the general impact that a new relationship will have on each of our lives.

If your prospective master has these three traits—self control, consistency and common sense—confidence will come naturally to him or her. If they are unsure of their abilities, their desires, and their self-image, give them time to grow up before you commit to them. Better you should be a slave wannabe, than one who has to live the rest of his life with regrets. Bad relationships, like bad scenes, can be avoided, but only if we use our penises and vaginas as organs of pleasure and not for “logic.” As the song says, “Don’t use your penis for a brain.”

Who’s Kidding Whom?

Society at large holds the idea that men are supposed to be dominant, aggressive, demanding, continually active, and generally assertive in their sexual behavior.

Leather folk, too, have their culture with its norms and expectations. For all the iconoclasm and diversity within the “scene”, leather still has its share of assumptions, of codes, and concepts of the way things are supposed to be. There’s an underlying idea that masters and tops are better than slaves and bottoms, and that leather folk are more powerful when they’re topping than when they choose subservient roles.

I don’t accept those assumptions. After all, I’m the guy who recently said, “I want a slave who will fuck me on demand.” Can a submissive assert himself by inserting himself? It’s a rhetorical question. If he does it on demand, it is hardly assertive.

I switch.

There. I’ve said it.

It’s not easy to say and it’s even more difficult to write. I feel like I’m putting myself down, admitting to something that isn’t “right”. It feels awkward to put in writing that I am sexually versatile, to admit to character traits that mark me as different.

Is it culture, semantics, or biology? Does it make a difference? Who cares?

I don’t. My indifference to generally accepted sexual norms is what allows me to be myself. It took me a long time to get here. I struggled for years to come out, to accept myself as the gay man that I am, and to become free of the criticism and prejudice that I feared my sexual orientation would bring.

God knows that, for a long time, part of me wanted to be straight and conform to our culture’s stereotype of men as husbands, fathers, breadwin-

ners, and monogamous breeders. Well, I can be a father and a breadwinner, and still be queer.

And not just queer, but a leather man as well. And not just a leather man, but a versatile one as well.

There's really no big deal in my admitting that I'm a leather man, a sadist, a first-rate master, a masochist, and a best boy. There are times when I enjoy fucking, times when I want to be fucked. I am simply admitting the truth.

There are men and women who live within a more singular role. My versatility makes me neither better nor worse than they are. It's simply who I am.

I had a recent conversation with a married man who is deeply closeted. It was a "rocky" conversation since I had difficulty understanding the duplicitous life he was living, and the senseless paranoia that plagues him. But as hard as I might wish to make him see it my way, I respect his choice.

I remember the closet I used to live in. I feared that the truth of my sexual orientation would alienate me forever from everyone I held dear. Part of me wanted to conform—to stay married, live a respectable middle class life, and live up to the expectations held by my parents, my church, my society. I feared that, as my ex-wife said during the time of our divorce proceedings, "Being gay will bring you an early and lonely death."

On the other hand, the pain of the closet was more than I could live with. I spent years covering my tracks, slipping away unseen for quick, anonymous, male-to-male sex, pretending that all was well in suburbia as my heart was breaking. I was lying to everyone around me. Most significantly, I was lying to myself. I chose myself and my feelings last, hating who I was (a gay man) and pretending to be someone else (Mr. Happily Married).

My married, closeted friend is afraid that his teenage children will learn that he is gay. I think that he may be the last to find out that they *already know*.

A lifetime is too long to live a lie, though I'm sure it can be done. East and West agree: "To thine own self be true," and "The truth will set you free." So, I told my wife, children, and parents the truth. I broke free of the closet.

The night I first had gay sex, I asked my partner what the term "coming out" meant. Some twenty years later, I know that it's more of a process rather than an event. Admitting I switch is just as much coming out as telling my daughters that I like men. Admitting is only telling the truth. Truth is its own reward. It brings freedom. It dispels fear. It opens the opportunities hidden by closets and pretenses.

After twenty years of coming out, I've found that the process gets easier. One learns that the dreaded reaction never happens. We get over it. They get over it. Life will go on.

I switch. I don't live in a black-or-white, this-or-that world. I live in many worlds, rainbow worlds, and I enjoy them all. Oh, there have been times when I tried to force myself into the "proper" role, to change myself into someone I "ought" to be. But doing that is neither fair nor possible. Pretense only fools

the pretender. Sooner or later, the facts come to light.

When I wore a chain around my neck, it showed that I was a slave belonging to a master. Yet, I also call myself a master, which means I have someone under my ownership. There are two sides to me.

Sometimes, I feared that the chain around my neck signaled to others that I was less than the strong master than I wished I was, or not quite the man I ought to be. But those fears were groundless; people were supportive about my "being a bottom". They understood and accepted me.

Time and time again, people have complemented me for being honest enough to admit my versatility. I am able to express my desire to dominate *and*, I also recognize and honor the man who dominated *me*.

This world is a remarkable place. We never fail to surprise each other and ourselves. I was never so surprised as when I came out of the closet and found a friendly world. Opening the door and letting in the light of truth about who I was gave me freedom. It showed me once and for all that the closet was not a safe place. It's a prison where the prisoner is his own jailer.

We hold the keys to our own closets. Take courage and open whatever door confines you. My ex-wife was wrong. There is only life on the other side; wonderful, liberating life.

Chapter 6

The Slave

The Slave's Attitude.

Masters and slaves are meant to support, empower, and enjoy each other. That means that their relationships ought to be honest, open, loving, respectful, and giving.

Am I writing a manual for slaves and masters, or am I teaching a Sunday school catechism? In the long run, there may not be much difference between the two. After all, one of the purposes of this book is to help you form right relationships, and that's not a goal too far from the purpose of most religions.

The details of an SM relationship vary greatly from couple to couple but, it seems to me, that there won't be any kind of lasting master/slave relationship unless the submissive partner has the right attitude. That doesn't mean that every submissive must demonstrate the attitudes outlined in this chapter. Some masters, for instance, might like a feisty slave.

Relationships vary from couple to couple. Patrick has one kind of submissive role with me. Michael, on the other hand, though submissive in the playroom, is far from being a slave, even if, when he's tied across a sawhorse being paddled, he looks like a slave.

I used to have a part-time slave named Chris who only demonstrated his slavery during agreed-upon times. When, for instance, his lover and I, and my lover were together, our roles were very different than when just he and I were playing. I can imagine that goes as well for married couples who have one kind of relationship in front of their children, another when at an SM play party.

In any case, I think the primary requisite for a slave's attitude is the desire to serve. As I see it, this is the main driving force behind all of a submissive's motives. Slavery, whether merely in the dungeon or 24/7 (all the time), is service. If a slave's mind isn't bent on serving, the slave will have a hard time maintaining his position.

Yes, there are compensations. Often, the pleasure of the sex or the security of the relationship provide incentive enough. In the long run, though, only those who desire to serve will make good and lasting slaves. Once a person knows he or she was "meant" to serve, finding a master becomes an overriding passion.

The second attitude, highly dependent upon finding that master, is trust. This attitude can't be feigned. If the slave doesn't trust his master, the relationship will quickly disintegrate. The same goes for the master's need to trust the slave as well.

Let me remind you that most of the negotiation process is meant to build trust. If it's lacking, not only will there *not* be a lasting SM relationship, there *shouldn't* be one at all.

Submission and surrender follow from the realization of one's need to serve and the feelings of trust that one has for an owner. Both of these traits allow the slave to "let go", to allow the master or mistress to take control. They are the slave's gift, the offering of oneself to another. They transform an individual into a piece of property, a toy, a slave, a servant, one who will obey and please the one to whom he submits.

Submission and surrender are expressed in different ways, varying with circumstances. They may mean obedience. They may mean that the slave takes a beating, cleans the bathroom, or goes to the store. Simply put, it boils down to, "My will is to do your will, Sir."

Other, more detailed attitudes then come into play. In doing the master's will, the slave needs to be zealous. He or she needs to learn to anticipate the master's will. I, for one, hate to have to tell my slave to do every little thing. I expect him to know me well enough that he does what I want before I ask. He knows what I like and how I like it. That's enough, I think, for him to make sure my "likes" are done.

The next attribute of slave attitude may be more personal than general. My slaves need to be flexible. My lifestyle is varied, full, and in some ways, not very predictable. It isn't out of the ordinary for me to bring home a guest for dinner unannounced, to say we're going out, or to request that such and such be done unexpectedly.

Other masters, of course, may lead more settled, more predictable lives, but I don't. My slave needs to "roll with the punches" and not get flustered by every variation I impose upon him.

Showing care and attention to detail are part of how a slave must function. I admit that I don't hassle the small stuff, but I do to have certain details attended to. Don't just clean the bathroom. Clean it well. It's a trait I inherited from my grandmother, who was always fussing about the corners. It's not that I'll clean them as well as she did. I just want my slave to do so.

A requisite attitude for a slave is that he or she be unobtrusive. There are times when I want to be left alone. There are times when I want to turn my attention elsewhere. It's then that my slave needs to make himself scarce, giving me the "space" I want even before I have to tell him that I want it.

That means that slaves need to serve in such a way that they are "seen but not heard." They need to assume the role of a quiet, uninvolved servant who does his or her job, leaving the master free to enjoy himself without mind to the slave's performance, whereabouts, or demeanor. At all times, the slave

needs to act in such a way as to serve the master without drawing attention to himself, though, believe me, if there are guests present, they probably won't miss a thing he does. Neither, of course, should the slave. While being unobtrusive, he or she needs to be completely attentive so that the slightest indication of desire on the master's part causes the slave to appear ready and willing to obey.

I prefer, and in fact insist, that my slaves be thankful. They are my property and I use them or ignore them as I choose. When I do give them attention, they need to know that doing so is, in fact, my choice. Saying thank you is an acknowledgment of their dependence upon their master for even the most insignificant of favors.

The language of slaves needs to be filled with four words: "sir", "please", and "thank you". I'm looking for more than just words, of course. Those words reflect deference, gratitude, and submission.

The degree of actual control that a master can assume, and the degree to which a slave can surrender, are highly dependent upon the slave being unattached and unencumbered. This points to very real obligations and relationships that are going to mitigate one's slavery. A complete slave needs to be free of all encumbrances to service, whether they be financial, intellectual, emotional, familial, psychological, or physical.

That said, if you really want to be a slave, you'll get yourself free of debt, of demanding relationships, of material goods that tie you down. That doesn't mean that you quit your job, give away your possessions, tell your family to go to Hell, and wait for your master to take over. It means, rather, that you do what is necessary so that when you and your master have successfully negotiated your slavery, you are ready to go.

The last "attitude" is the most difficult and controversial: love. I'll just say that it helps if a slave loves his master. That's enough on that subject for now. Later sections speak of love.

So You Want to Be a Slave.

You've got the idea that you want a long-term, full-time relationship with a dominant person. You've figured out that you're happiest having someone in control of your life. You think you want to serve, to obey, to please, and, yes, even worship the man or woman of your dreams. Added to that, you think you may have found him/her. You want to be his/her slave. Go for it and good luck. You're dreaming for a lot more than you think.

There are numerous ways to define a master/slave relationship. I happen to define it with a relatively higher level of intensity, commitment, and trust than others, but I don't think that my definition is better than anyone else's. The "right definition" is the one that's right for the those in the relationship.

Even the best trained, most experienced slaves need to learn the unique demands that every master has for his/her slaves. And if you are new at this,

the list of things to learn can seem endless.

Becoming the slave you want to be takes a willingness to change. That may seem easy enough. But what we forget is that the changes might not be the kind we want to embrace. As an example, your new master may want you to work out every other day to build a muscular frame on your cute, young body. That command may demand that you eat a better breakfast, drink less alcohol, and be asleep an hour earlier than usual. Can you handle it?

Slavery conjures up all sorts of thoughts about erotic activities, sexual adventures, and multiple orgasms. We think that it's all bondage, discipline, sucking, fucking, and body worship. But in reality, most of a slave's time is spent doing mundane chores such as cleaning and laundry. You'll be surprised at how much time a slave spends simply *waiting* for his/her master. Can you handle it?

Can you handle the training itself? Are you willing to learn? The first half hour with your new master will most likely be a torrent of instructions. He'll have preferred ways for you to address him, to stand in front of him, places for you to touch him, rules about touching yourself and about asking permission, requirements about clothing or the lack of it, etc.

You'll find it all very exciting at first. But can you last more than a night? More than a week? A month? Will you still want to be his/her slave three months from now? The thrill of it all will wear away. If it's a game to you, the game will become very boring. You'll find that you've given him or her all of your time and now you have none for yourself. You'll miss your friends, your apartment, your favorite bar, and putting on the music *you* like.

There will be times when you'll wish you could take off your slave collar just for a night. You'll want the guys in the bar to look at you as something other than someone's property, but they won't. You'll be seen as a slave, so they will assume you're off limits.

It sounds as if I'm down on the whole idea of ever realizing one's dream. I'm not. If slavery is what you seek, then go for it. Just go for it slowly.

Actually, you really can't do it any other way *but* slowly. It takes time to develop the levels of trust required for submission. And I will be the first to tell you not to submit to a person you haven't learned to trust.

It will take time to learn his/her rules, tastes, and expectations. For instance, I expect my slave to sleep over at my place often, to bring me orange juice in the morning, and to accept that there are other slaves in my life. Orange juice is an easy issue, but can you share your master?

It will be a matter of "Getting to know you." Your new master will want to know what you're thinking, how you're feeling, what turns you on and what turns you off. He'll expect you to be honest and open. He'll want to get into your head, to understand your expectations, your limits, your history. Both of you will bring a lifetime of experiences into your first encounter. Are you here out of desperation? Curiosity? Love? Anger? Self-hate? Are you bouncing from a broken affair or convinced that you were born to serve this man?

I don't think that it's necessary for you to have answers to these questions right now. But in time, you will have to face why you're doing this and the depth of your need to do it. What will be in it for you?

If your relationship is going to continue after the first disagreement, you'd better have a solid resolution about giving yourself to your master. Either you will decide that being a gift is sufficient and has its own rewards, or you'll look to give yourself to someone else, or you'll give up your slave fantasy entirely. Only time will tell.

I always encourage "wannabes" to try out their fantasies. So, as I wrote earlier, "Go for it."

A while ago, I answered a classified ad from a guy who wanted a permanent master. When we talked on the phone he pleaded with me to give him a chance. I did. We met and I began my usual routine of ordering him around.

It took less than fifteen minutes for him to say, "I'm sorry. This isn't for me." He was dressed and out the door within three minutes, muttering his apologies. He had literally driven 50 miles for 18 minutes of experience.

I think he thinks he failed. He didn't. In fact, he learned. He may not have liked what he learned, but he learned all the same.

The sad, simple fact is that it's more difficult to live our fantasies than we think. Making our great idea real takes patience and perseverance through trial and error. I've found that we've got to explore the dream on its own terms, letting it do its work of inner transformation and serious change, even as we let the dream itself change. It's a matter of letting go of our expectations of how the dream will be and letting it have a life of its own.

This section could have been called, "So you want to be a master?" We all have dreams, ideas, ideals. The particulars change, the details are different, but the process is universal: think, attempt, learn, grow, think some more, and try again. Go for it, whatever it is, and may you have all the luck in the world.

Chapter 7

Fear and Details

Many of my readers have written or called me to talk about wanting to get involved in leather but being afraid of doing so. At worst, it is the "How do I avoid going home with Dahmer?" question. More often, it is the fear of the unknown, the fear of rejection, or the fear of black leather and dark corners. There are fears about injury, about disease, about failure and disappointment. Those feelings are part of the human condition.

Fear muddles clear thinking. Fear paralyzes action. Fear robs us of energy that could be used for more productive endeavors. My dictionary defines fear as "an emotion of alarm and agitation caused by the expectation or realization of danger." In that context, I would say that fear in the face of real danger is healthy. But having fear in the face of imagined danger is futile.

I recently had conversations with several different men who were afraid of contracting HIV. That is a rational and very healthy fear. HIV is much more prevalent than we think, especially in the heterosexual world, and it seems to be a bit more easily acquired than we'd like. I've heard estimates that as many as 50% of the men in a gay bar are infected, most without knowing it. In any case, HIV is hard, though not impossible, to avoid. It is hard to avoid because we are all affected by it. It is a plague that is devastating our planet. Even if we never succumb to the virus itself, we can't help but be touched by the lives of those who are infected.

Several months ago, a young and very attractive man came over to become my slave. We talked about it for a good while. Needless to say, I was hot to trot.

When push came to shove, though, he was paralyzed by his fear of AIDS. In discussing his feelings, he shared that he had broken up with a lover who had tested positive. As much as he had cared for this guy, his fear of HIV got the better of the situation. The real tragedy was that this young man didn't have the right information about HIV, its transmission, and its prognosis. He saw HIV as an immediate death sentence and so he cut himself off from the joy of a meaningful relationship.

My young friend's problem wasn't his fear of HIV. Instead, it was his lack of information about HIV. He never sought competent counsel from an AIDS specialist. His lack of information let fear run rampant and it robbed him of his ability to make a fully informed, compassionate decision.

But HIV isn't the only thing we fear. I have found that fear of failure is rampant. Fear of rejection certainly paralyzes a great number of us. Fears of being discovered or recognized or ridiculed are prevalent as well.

There was a time, when I first began to frequent gay bars, that I feared rejection. I would sit or stand in the bar for hours wanting to speak to a certain hot-looking man. Like many others do, I hesitated and missed my chance, hamstrung by the fear that he would say "No."

One day I was approached by a man in whom I had no interest. We had a polite conversation and I told him, "No," as gently and as friendly as is possible. As he walked away, I reminded myself that this was my body and I had every right to share it or not share it as I pleased. It was okay for me to say "No."

It was then that I realized it was just as permissible for someone else to tell me the same thing. Whomever I approach has the same rights that I have. When they exercise that right, it's not a statement about me, but rather it's about their preferences and their pleasures. Yes, I would be rejected, but it was no longer any big deal. It's nothing to take personally and it certainly doesn't mean that I am a bad person. Life goes on after "No." The real truth, hidden by fear, is that the number of no's is very small.

I know that I fall squarely in the "better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all" camp. That's because I have acquired a balanced view of life and death. I am going to live now, for now, in such a way as to ensure that there will be a tomorrow for me. I won't allow myself to become paralyzed by expectations or dreads that are groundless. Being rejected in a bar isn't a matter of life and death, just as relating to HIV is not a death sentence.

Yes, some fears are justified but most can be overcome. Be honest with yourself about your fears and find ways to develop a balanced, completely human view of life and death. Life is too valuable and too short to be lived in fear, even for those of us who'll live to be a hundred.

Getting What You Want.

My years of slave searching have given me a wealth of ideas about SM relationships. People continually ask me questions about mastery and slavery, and about making their fantasy life into reality. Do we ever get what we want?

My primary response has been one of pragmatism. I enjoy the meeting and the negotiating, but, quite frankly, I'd rather have the live-in boy now and forego the talk. But life is such that the negotiations have to continue, and so, I persist, though Patrick wonders at my endurance. I wonder as well. After all, in the past three or four months, I've spoken with, written to, and met a few of

more than twenty slave applicants. Some "came and went" very quickly. Others are still in touch for now.

When I begin to wonder why I can't seem to find the right match, I look around and see that my situation is far from unique. I'll grant that there aren't many people looking for the intensity of ownership, commitment, and sado-masochism that I want, but even people with simpler requirements have unfilled dreams. Check out the number of dating services and you'll see what I mean.

Even for those who find the perfect combination, time has a way of taking its toll. Gay relationships are notorious for their lack of permanence. Though there is ample evidence to prove that we can be faithful on our own terms, gay relationships are said to be long-lived if they survive more than a couple of years.

Why the high failure rate? And let's not fault only gay men. Why the high divorce among heterosexuals?

I think we have become too quick to leap before we look. We enter into relationships which we hope will be long-term without understanding either our own desires or those of our partners. An illustration can easily be taken from my current slave search.

I have found a significant number of men who enjoy fantastic stories of domination and rough sex. They have used the plots and characterizations of fiction writers to form the basis for the life they wish to lead. When their fantasies come face to face with the real thing, they're like a guy who visited me in Ft. Wayne. He drove three hours to "serve" me and stayed all of five minutes once he faced his fantasy. Being naked and kneeling on my living room floor had none of the charm of a short story in *Drummer* magazine.

Having met dozens of such slave applicants, I've come to the conclusion that the problem is one of conceptualization. Each of us needs to be better focused on what we want out of life. Financial wizards call it planning. Business leaders talk about strategy. Politicos speak of "well-articulated policies". Likewise, those seeking a lover, a master, a friend, a mate, or whatever you want to call your prospective partner, ought to know what they are seeking.

We might get further along if we realized in the early stages of creating a relationship that success and longevity become more likely with longer conversation and negotiation, rather than instant commitment and jumping to conclusions. There is nothing wrong with taking things slowly.

What I see too often is that many men come around, act too quickly, and then run in panic because their expectations were off. It's better to approach slowly and over a longer period of time.

Unfortunately, we tend to equate *faster* with *better*. The guy who says, "Slow down," feels guilty that he's done so. Poppycock! I'd rather have the guy come back seven or eight times for short, easy times together, than have a heavy scene that is our first and last.

What I sometimes find is that initial difficulties in the relationship are

seen as a failure, so someone gives up completely. Instead, it should be realized that there is no failure in learning what you don't like, don't want, or can't tolerate. It is a matter of clarifying the image of what you seek and getting the focus right. Rather than fleeing the scene or ending the negotiation altogether, more discussion could be much more productive and informative.

We need to find ways to communicate our ideas to potential partners. Don't confuse each other with ambiguous terms. If you want a lover, don't say "boyfriend". If you want a fuck-buddy, don't muddy the waters with the word "lover". Though lovers can be dominant, submissive, and sadomasochistic with each other, that doesn't make them master and slave. Though there can certainly be affection between master and slave, that doesn't make them lovers.

There was nothing wrong with the guy who left in five minutes. His notion of the words we used during our negotiation didn't reflect the full impact of a real leather scene. When the scene started, it wasn't what he expected, but he quickly realized what I meant. He left rather chagrined, I fear, but at least the definitions of my words became clear to him.

My words have clarity not so much from many years and countless scenes, but rather because of the number of times I have seen words fail. To prevent mistakes from reoccurring, I have honed my words and, in so doing, honed my fantasies to a cleaner edge. That makes me seek a better defined partner; hence more scarce, but probably more durable.

That's not to say that you'll get what you define. There will still be need for compromise. Nothing, and no one, can be perfect on this plane of reality, so make sure your definitions are clear and reasonable. As my friend Donna has reminded me more than once, "You can have anything you want, but you can't have everything." Prioritize your fantasies and be clear in your priorities. Know what you want and what you are willing to do without.

So What Are You Saying?

The most common question I receive on my voicemail is "How do I find a partner?" No wonder the telephone dating people are making a killing. Meeting someone to date is a number one consideration.

I also get calls from people who meet other guys, trick with them once and never get an invite back. "What gives?" they ask.

I once spoke with a young man who seemed nice enough on the phone. His problem was in meeting the man who measured up to his dreams: dominant, into bondage, wanting to be serviced, preferably older, and experienced in a wide variety of SM activities. His question, of course, was how could he meet someone like that.

He had been to a couple of local leather club meetings and didn't find anyone to his liking. One club held members too intent on whipping for his tastes, the other club was full of bottoms — and he was looking for a top. He strikes out at the bars as well, since too many of the guys he cruises think that

he's a top, and he's not.

Now, that's his impression, or rather, my impression of what he said. I frankly don't think any of those statements are actually true, but they surely are a true statement of this young man's feelings.

We continued our conversation for some time. I asked as many pointed questions as possible, in an attempt to find a way of helping this guy to meet his desired man. By the end of the conversation, it was obvious that his problem was the universal human dilemma: our inability to communicate what we really mean.

I'm not sure whether it's a problem of not knowing ourselves well enough to say what we want or, of not being able to translate our inner feelings into words and actions that communicate correctly.

It takes two to communicate. "I know you think you understand what I mean but I don't think I said what I meant," may be the predicament we all face. Even the written word can be elusive in its meaning, and we get to edit that for correctness before it's published.

So, in the course of our conversation, this young man said he wanted to serve, that he really wanted to be someone's slave. That sounded good to me, but as we continued I realized that the meanings of our words were not identical. Do slaves tell masters how they are to be treated? I think not. Slavery is an especially unique lifestyle that requires devotion. This boy is into bondage and not much pain, though he says he is willing to be "open". So, he must find not just a master, but one into bondage and not much pain. Wouldn't that be a top and not necessarily a master?

Here, then, we get into the common problem about master and slave, and top and bottom. Which is which and who is who? How do we communicate limits and desire? How do we read someone's mind about their sexual dreams? I think the answer lies in asking the right questions and in listening well. There is also something to be said for approaching the conversation with an open mind, avoiding preconceived ideas about what should or will happen.

Much of what makes for successful cruising happens before the event. You've got to first know what you want and decide what you will do to get it.

Too often, we let our notions of what should be dissuade us from the attempt. Once-over glances aren't going to tell you whether that man is the man you want, unless, of course, all you care about is looks. Unfortunately, we let looks determine our course of action, when, in fact, there are more important characteristics that fulfill our fantasies.

We also need to see any relationship as created by the two of us. Relationships are defined by the two people in them. You're not going to find the *Leatherman's Handbook* master or the *Mr. Benson* boy. Instead, you are going to find another human being with whom you will mutually create what you can.

If you don't find that person, look to yourself. Look at your criteria and accept it as what you want, though it may be rare indeed, or change it to fit the

reality of your time and place.

So, you want to please. Do you know what that means? It means that you will satisfy your partner's fantasy, not that he will fulfill yours. Oh, in pleasing well, you'll get what you want, if giving pleasure is your pleasure.

I think, though, that there are a lot of bottoms out there who have that scenario all mixed up. They say they want to please, but instead, they want to be entertained. "Tie me up," he says. Who gets off on that? Not the top, usually. Though it can be an entertaining experience, it really requires work. How often, in fact, is the top left to clean up the playroom after the bottom has gotten his thrills and gone home?

So, what do you want?

There's nothing wrong with being a pushy bottom, with wanting to find the top who will make you feel just the way you want. What makes it difficult is that, too often, we forget that our fantasies are so individual, so precise, so unique that finding the right partner is nearly impossible. And so, we criticize others for not being what we want them to be. I know I'm critical of bottoms. I don't like playing with people who want me to entertain them, who ultimately want their fantasy fulfilled, not mine. Oh, they will try to make me think they like to serve, but they are speaking words without the content of action. Do they suck my cock for my pleasure or theirs?

I know. I can hear you telling me that I am too harsh. That's fine. Just let me know that you're not real slave material, and I won't take you home with me. Or, maybe I will, knowing that there might be some mutual play that will make each of us feel good, even if it's not the full-fledged fantasy for which I long.

In the meantime, I'll keep looking for what may be out there, for the person whose dream complements my own. I'll also remember that his fantasy is as important as mine and that there's nothing wrong with going home alone.

If I love the idea of what I want, then I will hold on to it and continue my search, broaden my perspective, look more intensely, be more open, more sure, more communicative. I will try to see where I fail to communicate, what I miscommunicate, and how I can listen more intently.

I will respect everyone's fantasies, even if they are not like my own. Everyone is equally deserving of achieving their dreams.

A Time Table for Enthrallment.

The actual process is a matter of sharing between two people. For that reason, there is no set pattern. In reality, what happens is dictated by who and where the negotiators are. Two people in the same city, for instance, are going to have a set of circumstances quite different from two people who are negotiating across a nation or a planet. I think, though, the following recommendations are rather dependable, modified by the various preferences that other masters have developed in their search.

1. Meet each other where you *are* (figuratively speaking) and without

expectations of what is going to happen. Be patient and explain everything in great detail. Answer *any* questions *whatsoever*, though the extent of the answer should be in proportion to the progress of the negotiations.

Early on the question about debt, for instance, may only need an answer like "Oh, I have a little but it is easily dealt with." Later on the same question might require that the applicant turn over a rather detailed asset and liability schedule. Don't be surprised that I suggest that the slave applicant might want to know the master's financial situation as well.

Clear communication about dreams, fears, needs, and possibilities are important. It's so much better to get stuff talked through before you commit than after. If there isn't the opportunity to explain, to understand and to be understood, you're only asking for trouble later.

2. Get to know the other's environment, such as his or her leather family and friends. What are the living conditions, the work expectations, the other relationships that will affect each of you? See if you can get references and check them.

3. I like to correspond and talk on the phone for about a month, giving us a chance to know each other. During that time, I will want to know about your availability and willingness to serve, about your finances (no details, just generalizations), your health, your family, your leather experiences, and your willingness to relocate. I will use the time to explain as much as I can, allay *any* and *all* fears you might have, and ascertain whether or not we are socially and sexually compatible.

Do the same with your prospective master or slave. Try for "no surprises" when you finally meet.

4. The most important thing about which a master will want to learn is your attitude. Are you truly a submissive? Are you a masochist? Are you willing to learn? Is slavery important to you? Can he become a priority in your life? *Can he teach you to please him in every way?*

Obviously, a sincerely seeking slave will want to know similar things about the master. Don't forget that the master is applying for a position as much as a slave is. He's not your master until you consent to the arrangement.

5. This process takes time and devotion. Answering correspondence, returning calls, and following up on orders in a timely manner is more demanding than you might expect. We all recognize that you have obligations elsewhere and most will respect them, but everybody wants to know that seeking a master or slave is serious to you.

6. Do not assume anything. You are a free person and should be treated as such. You will remain free until you give yourself to a master. Many slave applicants forget this fact, as do searching masters. If you feel intimidated or coerced, beware.

7. Try to take things a step at a time. Commitments should be spelled out, usually in writing, and should have specific durations. Rules will be developed as time goes on, but neither of you should assume anything. When in

doubt, *ask*. Assumptions are dangerous and lead to misunderstanding.

8. Use your contact time with your prospect to ask questions similar to those he asks you. Both of you should answer quickly and truthfully. Have nothing hidden. If you can't accept each other as you are, wrinkles and all (even literally) then you need not pursue the negotiations. Be careful of people who insist that they need discretion. You can and should be discrete, but the reasons for discretion ought to be given up front. If the applicant is hiding his conversation from a lover, a wife, or the law, it's better to know that now rather than later.

Even if discretion is the better part of valor, there is a time, a place for getting to know you, getting to know all about you. In any case, surprises are not going to go down well for either of you.

9. After about a month's worth of sharing, if you seem to be hitting it off, it's time to meet, and possibly to serve or be served for a limited time, such as a long weekend, depending upon your schedule and his.

Do not talk this thing to death. If you can't meet after about a month, then assume that you are not likely to ever get together. I have found that pressing flesh, sharing a meal, and talking face to face will answer a million more questions than any phone or modem can. How you kiss, how you serve, how comfortable or uncomfortable you are as a naked, waiting, housekeeper is important. How he looks to you, how he whips and fucks, how she senses and responds ought to be important to you. Those details will only be known after you've met.

It's at the just-before-we-meet stage that most negotiations end. You see, I hate to write this, but most people are just in it for the fantasy. They want to use their discussions and letters from and with you to jerk off. They don't know what they want and are wasting your time to try and figure it out.

Don't let this fact discourage you; just look elsewhere.

10. After the initial meeting, you will agree to continue or to cease the negotiations. He should send you home as scheduled (after a weekend or a week, depending upon your plan) and, if you agree to continue, you will be invited back for a longer stay. If that goes well, it's then time to make a reasonable plan for a longer trial period.

The operative word here is "trial." Try it out fully before you burn all your bridges and make commitments that you may regret. A step at a time is the way to go. That way, you'll both get there in one piece. Good luck in your search. You'll find the end result even better than your fantasies. Done right, they'll last longer too.

Chapter 8

That First Meeting

First-time behavior varies widely from master to master. Each of us has our own style. The first meeting may be something as innocuous as having beers together in a bar, going out to dinner, or sitting in the living room conducting a very mutual "interview."

I always make it clear that the first meeting is to be without expectations. Let's meet first, before we decide to jump in the sack or head for the dungeon.

I hope it is obvious that the circumstances of arranging the meeting often determine what happens when we meet. For instance, if we happen to meet in a bar or bath house, the discussion and negotiations are going to be brief and to the point. This is "trick time" and we're not going to worry about long term commitments. After a few niceties, some discussion about what we're into, and a quick discussion of limits (maybe) and safe sex, it's probably just a case of two horny men out the door. Few, if any of these encounters lead to repeat meetings or long term relationships.

It's not as if they can't, it's just that most often, they don't.

The second category is more apt to be what happens in the master/slave search. After a time of correspondence (via the mails, the phone, and/or e-mail), an exchange of pictures, and lots of questions and answers, there may ensue some phone sex or long distance SM. For many, in fact, the long distance and phone thing are the *whole* thing.

Again, I have only my experience to quote, though I've heard many confirm that what's happened to me happens to them. It's here that, in a short time, the conversation lags, the phone calls stop, and the "negotiations" fail. The conversion of fantasy into reality is much more than most can handle. The most recent prime example is some guy in Ohio who made it clear, on several occasions, that he wanted, even needed, a master. He was all moans and groans that he couldn't find one anywhere, that he would do anything to serve a real one, and that there were no limits. Yes, he would relocate. Yes, he wanted to be a slave. Yes, he desired nothing more than to be owned, controlled, dominated.

"OK," I said, "then call."

He didn't, of course. A month later, he again tried to get my attention on

the bulletin board. I ignored him at first, but relented later. This time, after an apology, he typed he *would* call.

He did. Our conversation lasted all of three minutes.

After telling me how desperate he was, I answered his questions about what I was seeking. As soon as I assured him that I only wanted a slave, not a bottom, not a friend, not a lover, he hung up the phone on me. No good-bye's, no thank-you's, no excuses. The phone just went "click" and he was gone.

I laughed. It has happened far too many times for me to have acted differently. That's why I hang loose in this negotiation stuff. I'll worry about what's going to happen when we first meet, after we first meet.

Folks with whom there is opportunity for long-term correspondence and where the meeting has to be well-planned (i.e., across borders and great distance), will want to have a great deal more information before the face-to-face meeting occurs. So, I send long letters, answer lots of questions, send copies of my columns (as they seem relevant), explain my expectations, and send letters designed to clear up as many doubts, questions and hesitations as possible.

If, after all this, they still haven't disappeared, we make a date to meet. For those coming long distances, I usually offer a place to stay, an insider's tour of the leather scene, and hospitality for an appropriate length of time. I will not offer to pay for airfare. If a slave can't get the money, I will help him save it. Any airfare can be afforded, even if you have to put five dollars a week into a jar until you've accumulated enough cash. If having a master isn't worth saving five dollars a week, you don't want a master very badly.

At the agreed upon time, I greet the applicant at the door, or meet him at the airport. We shake hands. I offer him a drink. We sit on the couch and talk. As the time progresses, I will show him around, help him feel comfortable, ask questions and answer his. Sometime in the next few hours, depending upon time and circumstances, I will ask him if he still wants to submit, and the process will intensify.

If he doesn't, I understand. He'll be treated like a guest and will go home when appropriate. That may mean now, tomorrow, or when his airline reservations permit. If we seem to be hitting it off, I will begin to exercise control. It will start with a simple request for him to take off his shirt.

Next he'll be kneeling on the floor in front of me, then standing naked. I will touch him, explore him, continuously asking him how he feels, what is he thinking, and can I play with this and that. My questions will lead him to offer himself to me.

For my part, I will meet him where he *is* sexually and sadistically, teach him what I want him to know, and slowly reveal myself to him. I will give him a taste of this and that. A small slap, a pinched nipple, a twist of his cock, a finger up his ass. In time, I, too, will strip so that he can see what he's going to get. By this point, some are hot to trot, others are worried sick. Some have left at this

point, maybe with sadness, but also wiser.

If all is well, and the scene is heating up nicely, I will offer him a collar with a time limit. Do you want to be my slave for the evening, for the night? For the week? The length of time, of course, depends on the circumstances. After all, if he lives around the corner, a short session can always evolve into an invitation back.

If he's traveled to get to me, it's more likely that the first offer will be for the length of time planned as his stay. In a week, for instance, a young man is coming from San Francisco. He asked to stay for five days. I agreed. If and when he shows up, and I really do mean if, since no-shows are facts of life, he will get three hours to be a guest, after which he will be offered a five day contract. At this point, he may be willing to sign it. Only time will tell what really happens. If he signs it, I will take his wallet, his credit cards, and his plane tickets into my safe keeping. For five days, his slavery to me will be real.

His time in service will include sex, housekeeping chores, and discipline. There will be lots of time to ask all sorts of questions, some time to see the sights of our wonderful city, and, in his case, time set aside for him to do some serious job hunting, since employment in Chicago is one of his personal goals, regardless of the chemistry between us.

So that's how it happens, at least with me. Other masters handle it differently; indeed, the same master most likely handles it differently with different applicants. Lord knows, I've never treated two people the same way.

In the long run, if the first meetings work out well, then we'll discuss the future. In any case, you'll go home having learned something about me and a lot about yourself. I will also insist that you make no commitments until you are home and free to think clearly.

If it seems to me you are what I want, I'll invite you back for more of the same. I'd like to think that more of the same will go on forever, but it's not only bottoms' fantasies that go unfulfilled, you know. Masters and mistresses get disappointed as well.

Your First Scene.

OK, you've decided that you're going to see what leather sex is all about. You've also decided that you're going to experiment with a friend. You and he have talked it over and have set the usual limits: no permanent marks, no unsafe sex, stop when I use the safeword "Rose."

A safeword is often agreed upon before the leather play begins. It's a word that wouldn't ordinarily be used in the course of the scene and one not easily forgotten by the bottom. It may be his mother's name, something associated with his work, or a color.

You've also agreed that the scene will stop if the word is used, though some folks only use the word to ease up on the action or to take a break. You might want to use it just to signal that something needs to be discussed, in

which case, the scene itself need not end.

By jumping in at this point, I'm assuming that you've discussed fantasies and that you're in agreement. In fact, your first leather action may not be with a "friend" but with someone you've met in a bar, through the classifieds, online, or on the phone. In any case, do a lot of talking about what's going to happen before anything happens, since that will preclude any surprises.

If you're topping tonight, then you should have gathered an assortment of toys for the festivities. They need not be expensive or extensive: some rope, a few clothespins, maybe a blindfold or a cloth that will be usable as one. Pick a chair, bed, or railing that will work for bondage. Get your lube, rubbers, and towels ready too.

Lighting, room temperature, music, and perhaps some libations are all appropriate things to consider. What you wear helps to set the scene, but need not be expensive. Jeans and a leather arm band can do nicely. On the other hand, if leather is your fetish, then by all means, dress for success.

When your bottom arrives, be ready. If you leave him waiting, do so for the effect, not because you're unprepared. You may or may not want to allow a few minutes for questions and some last minute dialogue.

Now the fun begins. Or should I say now the *work* begins? The first thing to do is to adjust your thinking and your feelings. Take command of yourself, of the situation, and of your bottom. Move into a dominant head space. See yourself in charge. Remember that the person who has decided to serve you tonight wants you to be in control, so take control.

Giving oneself permission to assert, to dominate, to control another is probably the most important "head space" a top can acquire. Society has programmed all of us to be submissive to some extent. There is no place for being a bottom when you are the top. Go ahead, it's OK to be masterful. That's the deal the two of you have arranged, so dominate him.

What now begins is a process. First, assert yourself in physical ways—by how you stand, what you say, the orders you give. I usually start by sitting on the couch and having my slave for the night stand in front of me, legs apart, hands behind his back. You may want to handcuff him or her immediately, or perhaps have the bottom strip.

This, of course, could be the time that a master inspects his slave. The inspection is not as much to see flesh, though that is always nice, but rather, to make the domination feel real. You are taking ownership here for the length of the scene. Feel the boy as you would a toy. Let that be your attitude, the way you act and interact with your new plaything. In this way, you'll be giving her attention, one of the things that people want and need the most.

A good part of what goes on is psychological. You may want to add comments about the inspection, for instance. At this point, it is only a slight and superficial feeling that you are imparting, but your job as top is to extend the control, expand those feelings into ever deeper areas of domination.

I do that in steps: a little bit of bondage may be applied at this point, with

handcuffs or other kinds of wrist restraints. I may tweak his tits or put clothespins on them, or pull on his cock. Actions like this, though not severe, are assertive and give the bottom a feeling of being taken, overpowered, controlled.

Appropriate words are important. I might say something like "Nice tits. Can I have them?" or "I like this cock. What can I do with it?" The verbal interaction gives the bottom a chance to acknowledge his or her own surrender. Hearing themselves respond with answers such as "Thank you, Sir. They're yours, Sir," and "Anything you like, Sir," help them to acquiesce more easily and with more meaning.

If the scene has been long in the planning stages, such as meetings that begin with the classifieds, then you may have already given him or her a list of rules. I have five rules and sometimes insist that the bottom memorize them and then recite them. If not, I may take this intro time to let the boy know I demand to be called "Sir", that his body is to be available to me with his legs spread at all times, and that he is not to touch his genitals without permission. Since he's just given them to me, I'll play with them and he won't.

While we're getting to know each other as master and slave, I'll do a little of everything, such as tit work, C&BT, or some light spanking. I may fuck his hole with a dildo, asking him "Whose hole is this?" and "What is it for?"

I like to remind them that there is only one answer that really counts: "For your pleasure, Sir." I don't see any reason for a slave to be with a master except for the master's pleasure, so the answer works well.

You'll find that every slave is different, and every master has his or her own way of doing things. Another top, for instance, may begin the scene by having the boy enter the room in darkness, strip, kneel on the floor, and await his master's voice.

I once had several scenes with a guy who had me come into the apartment that way, strip and put on a blindfold. I never did see him and to this day I don't know what he looks like, even though I've had sex with him on three or four occasions. I can only say that by touching him, I could tell he was smooth, well built, and very nicely hung!

Having gotten this far, with the boy kneeling in front of me, I strip. This gives him the chance to look me over and get excited about what he sees. I may try his cocksucking abilities out for a while too, and remind him to play with my tits whenever he's paying attention to my crotch. Later on, his failure to do my cock and my tits at the same time may become a reason to reinforce his first lesson with a paddle.

Now, I'll take a break, especially if this is a first time scene. I'll undo all the ties and clamps, may even put my pants back on. After the break, the boy goes back on his knees in front of me, and I'll pick up a collar, see if he knows what it means, and ask him if he wants to be my slave for the night.

In the vast majority of instances the answer is a "Yes, Sir". The scene will now begin anew, with increased intensity, and adjourn to the bedroom/play-

room. It's time for the boy to make me feel really good.

Well, that's how it might start from the top's view. So, what's a bottom to do?

For starters, make sure you know your top's expectations before you show up. A few well placed questions will get you off to a good start. When (get the exact time) and where? Does the top want you to wear or bring anything special? Do you know each other's limits? If there is an expectation of anal intercourse, does he want you to clean out your ass?

Whose toys will you be using? This is a more important consideration for toys that get inserted, such as dildos and butt plugs, than it is for restraints, etc.

As regards toys, if you do bring any, and in all likelihood you won't, make sure they are toys that you want to play with. I once had a bottom bring a rather large dildo with him and then complain when I used it. This kind of mixed message makes neither good sense nor a good scene.

The typical Miss Manners' stuff applies when you arrive at the top's place. Arrive on time. In fact, you would be well-advised to ring his or her doorbell at the precise moment scheduled. Tops, like everyone else, hate to wait. If for some reason you will be late, call ahead and explain your predicament.

It's not quite a digression to say, too, that not showing up is insulting, aggravating, and an indication of your immaturity and bad taste. There is nothing wrong with simply canceling a scene **FOR WHATEVER REASON** you feel you have to cancel it, but at least have the courtesy, consideration, and self-respect to do so, and with as much advance notice as possible.

The top may also have placed some other requirements on you, such as learning some rules, shaving your body (though many tops like to do this to you themselves), or bringing some specific article. I once required a boy with a lover to have the lover send me a note giving me permission to play with his boyfriend. It was also an opportunity for the lover to give me some ideas as to what I should do to please the boy.

Rules, obviously, presume that the roles you've agreed on are those of master and slave. If your scene is going to be one of less submission and domination, then different circumstances develop. Scenes are defined by the two or more people in them. Just be sure the communication of your intentions is clear.

Once you arrive, the first few moments will most likely be a time for the top to size you up, especially if you've never met. I like to ask the bottom if there are any questions. If you have any questions, doubts, or concerns, by all means, bring them up now.

If at any time you have any qualms, speak up. You and the top are together for pleasure, and anything that is going to distract from that needs to be addressed. You can always interrupt a scene as long as you do it politely and respectfully. Asking permission to speak is easy to do. Remember that the

top wants to get into your head, so your giving him more information, even in the form of expressing a concern, helps him to do just that.

Once the scene starts, and that actually happens the moment you arrive, you will have to do two things, each as important as the other.

The first is that you need to relax. This requirement is fundamental to the success of the scene. Relaxation, in the face of the domination, sadism, and stress that you are going to experience, may be no easy matter. Trust, of course, is the attitude that makes relaxation, and everything else in leather possible. Because of the primacy of trust, that means your qualms are important. To the extent that you let go of fear and doubt, you will have a satisfying trip. Your conversations and answers are directly correlated to your level of trust, which will allow you to relax.

The second requirement is that you devote yourself to your top's pleasure. I am making an important assumption here: that is, you will enjoy making him or her feel good. If pleasuring your top isn't a pleasurable experience for you, then why are you doing it?

I don't mean that every action will give you a buzz, bliss, or the warm fuzzies. Being this person's sexual servant is inherently satisfying to you, giving you feelings that are somehow enjoyable, either in the short or the long run.

One of the activities that masters, for instance, sometimes impose is house-cleaning. Now, most people would prefer to be having sex, but if a clean bathroom, freshly laundered sheets, and a dustless living room bring pleasure to your master, those activities take on a special importance. I hope it gives you pleasure to give him pleasure.

It's difficult to describe what will happen once the scene starts in earnest. There are a myriad of choices your top will make, based on his knowledge of you, the limits you've both agreed to, his preferences, energy level, and experience. Your experience and fantasies will play a very important part as well.

Neither of you is going to get more out of your time than you are able to bring to it. That's why I always suggest that you arrive well-rested, drug-free, and well-advised. The well-rested and drug-free parts ought to be self-explanatory. Well-advised means that you know your partner, yourself, and the expectations each of you brings to your play time.

Once you get there, relax, obey, and give pleasure.

Although one can't discount the value of technique and experience, especially as regards the top's role, the main requirement on the part of the bottom is that they have the right attitude. Tops, of course, must have the right attitude as well, but there is nothing as pleasing as a bottom who has the right frame of mind for SM play.

Now, that's where I'm coming from. In fact, I only have one hard and fast requirement for the men I play with: have the right attitude. As I said, "Relax, obey, and give pleasure."

I could add "trust" to this list, because, except in the most foolhardy of

situations, it is so important that its absence will end any and all scenes. I won't play with someone who doesn't trust me or whom I don't trust. Likewise, I am adamant that you not play with someone you don't trust either.

The fact that you trust your partner will make it possible to relax, which puts you into a frame of mind that will make the whole event go more smoothly and, very importantly, will help you tolerate uncomfortable and/or painful situations and activities. How you do so is up to you.

Visualization, breath regulation, muscle work, and similar meditative techniques are all part of an experienced bottom's relaxation repertoire. Being tense or anxious will make it more difficult for you to accommodate your top's wishes, intensify any feelings of discomfort or pain, and rob you of leather's pleasurable side effects.

The ability to relax, though it is integral to dealing with pain, is necessary for other reasons as well. Not every SM scene has a component of pain. Bondage, for instance does not need to be painful, but one still needs to relax when bound. Well, maybe the word "needs" is too strong. You don't have to relax. Instead you can tense up, aggravate yourself, experience increased stress and, generally, have a less pleasurable experience. Get my point? Relax or forget the scene altogether.

A relaxed state of mind is also more conducive to your letting go, surrendering to the top's control and manipulation. That is what I like in my partners and that is exactly why I prefer to play with slaves rather than with bottoms.

The distinction between those two roles is in the degree of control. Each person has the right to define his own limits, fantasies, and actions.

I write from my own vantage point. I seek and enjoy slaves. That doesn't mean that I don't play with bottoms. I most certainly do, but my preference is for something more than merely to top a bottom. Finding that "more" is often difficult since the vast majority of available playmates stay in the top-to-bottom portion of the wider dominance/submission spectrum.

In other words, there are damn few slaves and fewer masters out there. The vast majority of leather folk are somewhere in the middle. Hence, the term "pushy bottom" signifies a person with *some* masochistic or subservient role, but who is not willing to give up a substantial degree of control.

The degree is the separating factor. The actuality is that none (well, that might be too strong, too) of us is willing to surrender complete control. But losing most control, or a substantial amount of control is acceptable. Persons incapable of giving up any control ought to find out why, and see if, in fact, they ought to be tops rather than bottoms.

All this is important because it is *surrender* that opens the mental pathway for experiencing alternate states, and without abiding by your true nature, your SM experiences will be less significant. There may be fun in *playing at* leather, but that's not leather, it's pretense.

Surrendering is one of the components of relaxing. Interestingly enough, it is also a component of obedience.

There is an old joke that says that with a real masochist, a real sadist will do nothing. Maybe so, but in real situations, it is activity that activates and sustains the action. Sounds redundant, doesn't it? Without activity we're back to mere fantasy—you haven't really accomplished your first scene. That's why I add obedience to my list of necessary attitudes.

Once again, there are situations and scenes which are constructed to have a component of adversity in the relationship. SM play involving imprisonment, wrestling, kidnapping, naughty school girls, etc., certainly come to mind. Generally, though, I like compliant, respectful, and worshipful attention to my desires. I fashion my play and choose my play partners accordingly.

It's your scene though. As long as you remember that the "your" in *your* scene is plural, then do what you both like. When asked what I like in a scene, I make it clear that my tastes are quite eclectic, with a little bit of everything, or almost everything. On the other hand, if you were to watch me in a scene (when the video comes out, that is), you'd see that I very often just lay back and say something like "OK, boy, make me feel good."

I strongly believe that the only reason for a master and slave to be together is for the master's pleasure. I fully realize that other reasons may also apply, such as to allow the bottom to learn something, but if a scene's not pleasurable, why be in it?

Having rung your top's doorbell at precisely the assigned moment, your first scene will simply involve keeping your head in the right place. First scenes are generally filled with a great deal of training, that is, the top telling you what he or she likes, and you responding in due time for his or her pleasure.

One of the most common difficulties you will encounter in this meeting is your fear of failure. Time and time again, bottoms are afraid they will fail, won't be good enough, and will gain neither the top's praise nor his approval.

Relax. Tops don't expect you to be anywhere near able to give them what they are looking for. They expect that you need training and they are more than willing to give it to you. Guys who see themselves as already-trained are seldom able, for instance, to suck my cock properly. Why? Because I enjoy having my nipples played with simultaneously and they generally fail to think of that. So, I tell them and tell them again and again, until they get it right. Now, sometimes that means I have to punish them for getting it wrong, but that's only part of the process.

Eventually, your first scene will end. You'll get dressed and go home, always a better person for the experience. "Always?" you ask; YES, always. Each scene, even those that end quickly, awkwardly, or perchance disastrously, holds some bit of a lesson, some self-revelation.

Your first scene won't be a failure, even if you find out that you hate SM. Learning only that bit of information about yourself is a step in the right direction. So, go ahead and take the first step.

Humiliation, Paddling, Chastity, Nudity, Punishment

Warning: The Language in This Section Is Offensive.

A section heading like the above will entice more readers than it will deter. So, you've been warned. This section is about humiliation—mostly verbal abuse—and has explicit examples. Stop reading now, or endure the profanities that follow.

Over the holidays, my good friend John invited me to a Friday evening party where I met many of his associates from work. That meant, of course, that most of the people there were neither leather folk nor homosexuals.

Eventually Rob, a tall, powerfully built man, began to ask me about myself. I'm sure you're familiar with the usual questions about "Where do you work?" and the like.

"I write," I replied.

"Write what?" he asked.

In short order I told him about my next column—on humiliation. The woman sitting next to him joined in the conversation. "What do you mean?" they asked. By the end of the conversation, the gentleman wanted to read the column. I guess there are more open-minded straights than we queers realize! Or is it that we are so fascinated (straight, queer, and bi) by humiliation that it transcends sexual orientation?

My trusty dictionary says that to humiliate is "to lower the pride or dignity of; mortify." Humiliation can also be called "degradation". It's certainly a practice that flies in the face of empowerment, encouragement, and edification. Humiliation is about as far from PC as you can get. It smacks pride right in the face.

Humiliation often takes the form of verbal abuse, for example, "Suck that cock, you god-damned mother-fucker." From there, we can go easily down the road with phrases like "Take my prick, you ass hole". In a recent conversation, an acquaintance told me about being called "cum tongue". That was a new one for my list, to be added to shit sucker, fuck hole, fuck face, faggot, and hole. My favorite is "toy", and that isn't short for Tolstoi.

You might wonder why an affirming and loving person such as myself would be into this. Questions like that make my writing thrive.

It can be a complex issue. In fact, I'm not sure I can give an answer, though that won't stop me from trying. Essentially, it boils down to balance. Why does a prosperous, intelligent, and successful person enter the "dark" world of leather sex and humiliation? To regain and maintain his balance. Let me cite a favorite example:

Charles is a loan officer at a major metropolitan bank. He is responsible for the management of loan portfolios worth millions of dollars. He grants or denies credit to Fortune 500 corporations throughout the Midwest. He is wined and dined by men of power and prestige. Yet, when he enters his leather world, it is as a collared "dog-slave." He eats from a bowl on the floor and gives his master whatever pleasure is demanded. His "two lives" are in complete incongruity. But each balances the other, and, in fact, makes the other possible, and not just possible, but *invigorating*.

I admit that negatives may be involved here. The need to be humiliated may be based on self-loathing, on guilt, on some kind of condemnation felt from others and manifested as ill feelings towards oneself. But it is unrealistic to think that all human needs are (or should be) simple, pure, and wholesome. To ignore or repress feelings is drastically more naive and, in some cases, dangerous.

There's probably more than that going on as well. It is a matter of need. We feel a certain way for reasons that may or may not be clear, and those feelings urge us, sometimes even demand us, to seek experiences which make those feelings into something concrete.

Western civilization recognizes universal polarities, but we tend to see opposites in terms of good and evil, affirming one side as better than the other. But are we sure? How many times have we been deceived by the appearance of opposition?

We have this conceit concerning the way we *ought* to go. We are inclined to think that it must be one way or another. We deny that there can be health in sickness, life in death, empowerment in belittlement.

But what if we were to embrace both as equal, to somehow see all things as one, to rest in the middle, balanced and centered?

The Shakers' song, "'Tis a gift to be simple," is exquisite for urging us to be what we are meant to be. The goal is to become whole as a human; to completely experience who and what we are intellectually, emotionally, physically, spiritually. Wholeness cannot be found by denying or by grandstanding. It must rest in awareness of the entire self, including the sometimes shocking extremes.

I have long seen my desire for men as worshipful. It was only a few months ago, as I was masturbating, that I "discovered" the complement of worship: revulsion. Can we worship without reviling? This speaks to the reasoning behind humiliation.

The young man who asked about humiliation and the stranger who wanted to read about it are simply looking to meet deep and hidden needs.

Pick a Paddle.

My Master Lynn and I were giving Timothy a chance to experience life on the top side of leather. Lynn told Tim to pick one of the paddles hanging from the head of the bed and use it on me.

Tim looked over the five instruments that were hanging there and chose a traditional wooden paddle, one similar to those used in fraternity hazings. It's seventeen inches long, narrow at the handling end, about three and a half inches wide on the business end, and made of highly polished maple laminate.

Timothy tied me spread-eagle, upright at the foot of the bed and began telling us how he had chosen this paddle because it was wider than the others and therefore wouldn't hurt as much. Later, when he was bare-butt-up across the bed, I was able to correct Tim's assumptions about paddles and pain.

My collection of implements is more utilitarian than extensive. There's the wooden paddle mentioned above, an 18 inch long riding crop, a two inch wide, black leather paddle, a double thick paddle of razor strop leather, and a clothes brush from which I've removed the bristles. Each piece has its own effect. Tim's statement that wider meant less pain wasn't exactly true.

The effect of any paddle depends on a variety of things: force and speed of the blow, type and texture of the paddle, the part of the body struck, and the condition of the person being beaten.

Any of the instruments, in fact, could be made to cause considerable hurt, or could be used more gently without any serious effect.

Assuming for the sake of this discussion that the force and place of application doesn't vary from paddle to paddle, the wooden paddle that Tim chose ranks three out of five in effect. Its smooth, wooden surface can pack a real sting to it. It is easy to grasp and has a nice swing, especially when you want to really wail on an ass. It's not the kind of toy that I begin with, but when I've got a bottom's butt ready for a good beating, it is quite satisfactory.

The thinner leather covered paddle is good for beginning. It is a thin metal shaft covered with leather. It is quite flexible. Its relatively thin width makes it easy to be especially selective about where the blows land.

Next up the scale is the riding crop, which should probably be seen as a mix between whip and paddle. Crops are among my favorite because they allow a real precision of aim. The loop of leather at the end is nice and snappy but doesn't do a great deal of damage. On the other hand, if one wishes to concentrate the force of the blow with the shaft, crops can leave very nice red marks.

I like to watch a crop color a specific spot. They are very utilitarian in that regard. I enjoy using them on genitalia, as well as on backs. One can really mark a back with them quite easily. When done right, they leave a very nice crisscross effect.

My lover Mike doesn't like the next paddle. It is the newest addition to

my collection and, since it was on sale at IML for only ten dollars, I couldn't resist the bargain. It is two pieces of thick leather sewn together. The last four inches of leather are left loose so that they flap. This gives a double effect. First, one piece of the leather hits the bottom and then the second piece hits the first, giving the effect that the bottom is hit twice. The flap also causes a loud sound. It's my theory that the noise is just as bothersome to Mike as the pain, since it increases the psychological effect.

The last paddle—actually a modified clothes brush—is the most painful. I reserve its use for discipline, for when I think that my boy needs to be punished for an infraction or for disobedience. When I use it, it invariably leaves a strong mark, often one that's black and blue in just two or three swats. Since I pulled the bristles out of the brush, the paddle has six rows of small holes in its surface. It is these perforations that cause the increased pain. A smooth paddle actually pushes a layer of air against the flesh as the bottom is spanked, and this air acts as a slight buffer. In the case of this brush, the holes disrupt that layer and cause contact to be more severe. At the same time, the skin is pushed into the holes slightly and small blood welts form, hence the ease of blacking and bluing.

Any of the above instruments can be easily changed. Drilling holes in the wooden paddle, for instance, would make it a much more painful toy. Adding tacks or grommets to the leather would increase its bite.

Picking the paddle is only one part of the job. How it is used makes a big difference as well. I prefer to start slowly and gently—playfully really—and, as the bottom warms up to the task, then to increase speed. Varying the cadence, changing positions, and eventually stripping the butt bare are all part of the fun.

Eventually, I get very intense, though I am careful to help my bottom get used to the feelings. It's not just a case of wailing on him or her, but rather of building to the effect. I take frequent breaks, allow the ass time to adjust, and make sure that I vary the places I hit.

As an ass gets reddened, it can actually take more severe strokes. The endorphins click in and help to dull the pain for the bottom. As this happens, the pain becomes pleasurable.

For intense ass beating sessions, it's important that the bottom be adequately restrained. This, of course, varies from bottom to bottom. It also depends on what kind of scene you are having. Tying him or her down spread-eagle on a bed, or across a hassock, saw horse, or workout bench are all good measures to prevent excessive flailing.

However, there is something to be said for making him or her stand there, grab their ankles and take it that way. In more sexual scenes, I like to have him suck my cock while I go at his butt. I find spanking to be very arousing and often use it as foreplay just prior to fucking the bottom. I like the feel of the reddened ass as I rub my pubic hair into the hot cheeks.

By this point, I'm liable to be using the crop, aiming precise blows at the

anus itself. When I get to that point in play, it's not long before I'm ready to shoot one hell of a full load; safely, of course, but with much pleasure.

Everything About Chastity Belts.

Well, *almost* everything! To be honest, I can't tell you *everything*, because I have yet to experience being confined for days, weeks, or months (!) in a device that kept me from attaining sexual gratification. But I can tell you what I know.

I went to schools where chastity was taught as a way of life. The good nuns put mental devices into our education that made chastity a number-one virtue. I've moved out of that phase, but it doesn't mean that chastity hasn't been a subject of conversation on more than one occasion.

Your local adult sexual paraphernalia stores all have chastity devices on display and for sale. I admit that a picture here would be worth a thousand words, but, short of that, it will suffice to say that they come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and materials.

The leather ones are for fun or play and short term confinement. If they have some means of allowing urination, then they can be worn for longer. I recently bought a leather sack with a locking clasp for encasing someone's cock and balls. It has a small opening through which a tube can be inserted. The idea here is to use a catheter on (or in) the subject first, then extend the tube through the hole. For the squeamish, a Texas catheter will work fine—that's a latex device that looks like a condom with a tube on its tip. You can buy them at prosthesis supply stores.

For longer periods, there are various metal chastity belts and cages. I'm not sure how practical any of these might be in the long run, but they make interesting discussion pieces and (sometimes) effective erotic toys.

I've tried my leather ball case on two or three guys so far, and can see why it was sold to me at a discounted price. It slips off too easily. Nice try, really, but not effective in the long run.

A friend of mine had his top put a padlock around his genitals. That worked for a week or so, but eventually even that came off in the shower.

The only device—and you have to see it to believe it—that I can attest to being a real chastity belt is sold by Constance Enterprises (Box 43079, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043). It is custom made to exact measurements for either men or women. It is SM at its hi-tech best, constructed of stainless steel and coated in neoprene for cleanliness and comfort.

Once your slave is encased in this apparatus, he or she won't be touching his/her private parts until you unlock it. It is easily and comfortably worn under clothing and poses no health hazards. Of course it does make it a little difficult to get past the security guards at your local airport, but hey, your slave shouldn't be traveling without you anyway.

My experience has been that, more often than not, it is the bottom in the relationship who seeks to be confined. There are certain circumstances where

it is the top's idea, but you would be amazed at the number of people who are out there seeking someone with whom they can have a long term relationship that includes regular bondage, and specifically, the application of a chastity belt.

An acquaintance named Al first introduced me to the idea of having a boy "under lock and key". He visited me one weekend. We got along really well and, after spending enough time together to know that I was sane, he asked me if I would measure him for the belt from Constance Enterprises.

They asked for a slew of measurements from here to there. Not just waist, but length, girth, distances from anus to penis, and from center of waist to sides and back again. I filled in all the required numbers and Al left with his completed order form in hand.

About six weeks, later he told me that the belt had arrived and then surprised me by asking if I would keep the key. Since he lived a fair distance away, I was hesitant to do so until we knew that one could actually live in it for an extended period of time. So, he kept the key and put the belt on.

After three weeks, it was obvious that the belt was exactly what it was meant to be and he mailed me the keys. Chastity belts, of course, can be imposed as discipline, punishment, or (no joke) protection. After all, they are foolproof protection against date rape.

But why does a person surrender the use of his genitals willingly? Certainly there was no force involved in Al's case. It was his idea and done at his instigation. The answer lies in a desire to change or strengthen one's focus. When the use of one's genitals is submitted to another, there is an incredible bonding that takes place, a constant reminder of the relationship. We seldom use the word "ownership" as regards another person, but in this instance, the ownership is ever on one's mind, the relationship ever-present even when the owner is absent.

The abstinence from sex that is imposed by the belt builds a reserve of energy that is eventually directed into other areas of one's life. As those nuns would say, it is the sublimation of one drive for the realization of another.

When the "owner" unlocks the belt and takes what is his, allowing the "owned" to once again express him or herself sexually, the release can be dramatic as well.

In fact, it isn't the bottom's release that holds importance for the bottom. Rather, the pleasure the top receives is foremost in the bottom's mind. For he or she has surrendered him/herself as gift to the other and knows so well that it is better to give than to receive. Once again, we find that the basics of true SM are not pain and violence, but giving and surrender. I'm talking about love, as it is seldom defined in contemporary society, but it's love nonetheless.

Thoughts on Being Naked.

It is a common fantasy for a slave to want to be kept naked. Many masters desire to keep their slaves nude as well. This is the kind of activity, of course, that one doesn't often see. I'll be quick to add that that's too bad. We ought to get past the taboos we hold about seeing flesh and learn to appreciate bodies and their parts for the incredible creations they are.

So, let me explore the meaning and experience of a slave's nudity.

As complementary aspects of the same relationship, mastery and slavery share many similar traits. Both, for instance, are based on attitude. The successful master knows himself, his desires, and his privileges, and is confident in his ability to control himself and others.

Slaves see themselves as serving, subservient, willingly submitted to another's will in order to gain some desired goal. The slave finds ways to accept his or her master's control, to be glad to obey, to respond happily, even when the "fun" of it wears off.

The relationship that Lynn and I created together was probably more unconventional than most, primarily because I was in the position of being his slave while I still had the opportunity (exercised as feasible) of dominating others. He recognized the various social and sexual needs in my life and gave me "room" to be true to my own self, even while serving him. He imposed no rules, for instance, that controlled my finances, my other relationships, or my time away from him.

One of the few rules that he imposed was that I was to be naked in his presence. There were various qualifications to the rule in order to accommodate others, the weather and convenience, but, in general, when it was just the two of us, or only those few who understand and appreciate our relationship, I didn't wear any clothing.

A slave's nudity is a sign and an experience of submission. More personally, a slave's skin is his uniform, declaring that he belongs to another, that nothing is hidden from the master, and that he is always—without reservation, in every way—available to the master's sight and use. The chain collar around his neck says the same thing.

There is much to be said about being exposed. The condition creates all kinds of feelings and thoughts which flow through the slave's mind in the course of a day.

I admit to being an exhibitionist, so being naked holds a kind of thrill for me. From a slave's point of view, it also kept me very conscious of my relationship, especially when, for whatever reason, I wished I were dressed. It is at those times that I came more closely in touch with my chosen state.

I'm generally proud of my body. It's trim, well proportioned, nicely tanned, hairy, and attractive. At least, that's what I'm told. Those positive feelings of self-worth certainly made my nudity more comfortable.

There are times, though, when one wants to kick back and be free of a submissive relationship. There are times when the dishes and laundry, the

house cleaning, the waiting, the continual beck-and-call of one's master gets tiresome. I sometimes had those feelings, even if my experience of slavery wasn't as continuous and all-encompassing as it is for some.

Because of our work schedules and the fact that Lynn and I live in separate places (though we spend a great deal of time together), my servitude was less than full-time, though my attitude was certainly as full time as I could make it.

Nudity provides a reminder of one's servitude and a real opportunity to use the reminder to adjust one's attitude. It goes like this: For whatever reason, I remember that I am naked. I might at the same time wish I were clothed. The nakedness reminds me that I am in a relationship of voluntary servitude. I take a deep breath, accept my condition, feel the cool air upon my skin, and remind myself that I am naked by my master's will and my own obedience for his pleasure. I choose to be his slave once again and remind myself that that is what I am. I remember that I want to please him, that my nakedness is pleasing, and so I am able to "adjust" my feelings to a more positive frame of mind.

Those words have obviously sexual connotations, but to see nudity as merely a preface to sex limits its impact and the depth of possibilities in a master/slave relationship. Practically speaking, sex can only take up so much time in a permanent master/slave relationship. The world demands that we work, sleep, eat, do chores and errands, and relax. At one time or another, sex has to take a back seat to any or all of those duties. There is more to nudity than just a preface to sex. It is a surrender.

When the master sees his naked property, he knows that the nakedness is a form of obedience, a real gesture of surrender. He can take pleasure in the knowledge of his ownership, his control. The nudity reminds him of his place as master, as owner. There is pleasure, we hope, in the sight of a naked slave, his body shown fully for all its natural majesty and beauty.

Contrary to expectations, a distinctly nonsexual air permeates most of the time a master and slave spend together. In the course of their relationship, the nudity becomes "second nature," no longer in the forefront of thought. It is then that each will become comfortable with the rule of nudity. It becomes part and parcel of every day living. In that, there is a great freedom: acceptance of oneself on the part of the slave, acceptance of the slave on the part of the master.

I asked Lynn what he thought of the frequent nakedness he imposed on me. His first words were that he was "comfortable with it." As I queried him further, he said it was enjoyable, a "sign of his ownership," and something he took for granted. He noted that I "enjoyed it," and he found that most slaves did as well, since many of them really were exhibitionists at heart.

He recognized the impracticality of nudity as a constant state, what with the arrival of guests, the need to leave the house for errands and chores, the occasional need for clothes for warmth.

For my part, being naked in front of my master was comfortable as well, reaffirming our bonding, our intimacy, our love. Our relationship is a growing, learning experience. By its very nature, it changes us, teaches us, heals us. I got used to entering his home and stripping—not necessarily for sex, not for show, but just to be as he wants me and to affirm that indeed we were one in this state of mastery and slavery: close, intimate, and relaxed. That's not a bad way to be.

Pain, too: Punishment.

Inflicting pain is a turn on for me. It's something I do because I enjoy it.

Corporal punishment has two distinct aspects. On one hand, it is the infliction of pain for the sake of pleasure. On the other, it is the master's tool to train his slaves. Most SM players don't make much of a distinction between the two actions. Most SM players, for that matter, have little or no thought about punishment. After all, most leather folk are in the great middle between mastery and slavery. Each is (we hope) a fully responsible, self-directing adult.

It is only in the unique relationship between a fully surrendered slave and his acknowledged owner that correction and instruction by way of pain is practical. Try to give your lover a spanking to change his behavior patterns, and I bet you'll find yourself in an interesting and soon reversed situation.

Effective punishment has guidelines. It is responsible, clearly defined, and effective. It is predictable, of short duration, immediate, and intense.

First off, the ability to punish and the acceptance of such activity needs to be part of the agreement negotiated between master and slave. It ought to be spelled out in the course of their becoming owner and owned. I do that in my introductory essay, "Expectations and Regulations Concerning Voluntary Servitude," a copy of which every slave-applicant receives when we begin negotiations.

In it, I write "The slave will demonstrate full knowledge of the ramifications of surrender and will accept the conditions of such without reservation or hesitation. It must be perfectly clear to both parties that it is a free, informed, and adult choice to enter into the relationship of voluntary servitude (henceforth referred to as "slavery"). Submission to this lifestyle under the dominance and control of a master must be a free choice entered into by the slave without coercion or deceit.

"The rules of service may be summarized by four core statements defining the slave's position," number three of which is "the acceptance of discipline without complaint or resistance."

This tenet is expanded in a later section called "Behavior Modification". The master will use, and the slave will assent to the use of, behavior modification techniques. Once the slave is under the master's control, certain changes in the slave's behavior may be required so that the slave conforms more exactly to the master's will. Techniques will include discipline, deprivation, instruction, positive reinforcement, encouragement, incentives, isolation, and reward."

The expectations continue: "In the case of conflict, the slave can expect the application of behavior modification, discipline, dialogue, and honesty.

"Discipline. As stated above, the slave will receive discipline for the master's pleasure and the slave's training. The master will teach the slave to accept it willingly and totally. The slave will be open to it, and will find the inner strength and commitment to transform the negative aspects of discipline (pain, humiliation, discomfort, trauma, etc.) into a positive viewpoint, and eventually, as a natural, expected, and welcome aspect of the slave's submission.

"Discipline will not be administered in such a way as to injure the slave nor decrease the slave's value. It will be an integral part of the slave's lifestyle, according to the master's direction and will. The master will use hands, paddles, belts, cat-o-nine tails, brushes, confinement, bondage, deprivation, or other means suitable to help the slave acquire and maintain appropriate attitudes and responses."

For his part, the slave accepts the master's rules. One of them clearly states: "I will accept discipline willingly, knowing that my master is in control and has more wisdom, knowledge, and experience than I in these matters."

So then, punishment is neither capricious nor is it a surprise. The slave must be cognizant of the rules under which he serves, and infractions of those rules must be met with responsible punishment. Infractions are not invented, not mistakes, not determined as such after the fact.

Don't use punishment as an excuse to inflict pain. If you need an excuse, your mastery is certainly suspect. If a slave uses disobedience to have his masochistic needs fulfilled, then there's something wrong in the relationship.

Anger has no place in punishment either. If the offense is harsh enough to provoke the master's anger, punishment is best left until after a cooling down period.

I am of the opinion that regular dialogue about the relationship and the week's events will keep each person aware of the other's feelings. Patrick and I do it weekly. It provides a time for mutual reflection, discussion, and clarification. I use it to fine-tune Patrick's service to me. Infractions of my rules are discussed and the punishment is administered.

It's also helpful that punishment be of short duration and imposed soon after the infraction takes place. Delaying or dragging punishments out over a long period will cause resentment. The idea is not to cause anxiety, but to give strong incentive for the slave to change his behavior.

There's more to good punishment. Many slaves see infractions as failure. Proper discipline ends the event, providing a much needed catharsis. It clears the air and renders the transgression "over and done with". It allows healthy venting of feelings such as guilt, rebellion, and anger. Its purpose is to reassert the master's control which was interrupted by the infraction, and to restore the slave to his desired position as submissive, thereby erasing his rebellion. When it is over, the slave will feel cleansed and forgiven, once again the master's favorite possession.

All this, of course, sounds preposterous to egalitarian Americans. They view equality as sameness and disregard the importance of being rightly related. The Shaker tune, "'Tis a Gift To Be Simple", says it all: "It's a gift to come down where you ought to be... in love and delight."

Chapter 10

How To Give Oral-Genital Pleasure

I lay on my stomach, his cock in my mouth, my chest between his thighs, my fingers brushing his tits. It was worship, devotion, pleasure: intense, man-on-man sex.

To say that cocksucking and cunt-licking are an integral part of sex seems redundant. After all, our detractors are quick to call us cock-suckers!

There is a lot more to sucking and licking well than simply having a prick in your mouth or a tongue up a vagina. Quick suck-encounters provide release and satisfaction, but real pleasure comes with knowing your partner and enjoying a full range of well-paced activity. When you know the person you're playing with, you learn so many more ways to provide satisfaction. He or she will know your hot buttons as well.

It was while I was occupied as described above that I got the idea for this chapter. I was literally face to face with a beautiful cock. My chin was brushing the rather large testicles that would feed the prick its precious man juice. The rod itself was engorged with blood, extended to its maximum, a hefty eight inches. It filled my vision, smooth and straight, gently, but powerfully resting in my view.

The prick's mushroom-shaped head lay in front of me, shiny with my spit. Its healthy, flesh-colored glow beckoning me to worship. I am a cocksucker. This penis is my god.

I am naked, prostrate on the altar that this bed has become. Occasionally, my partner will pinch my tits or caress my hair, but most of what will happen tonight will be in praise of, and for the pleasure of, this man's manhood.

We will end when his cock has raised itself in glorious orgasm, spewing its life-force all over his torso. His cock will bring him to what the French call "le petit mort," the little death, an incredible moment when time stands still and ecstasy consumes the moment.

I write too fast. The fleeting moment of ejaculation is but the end. There is so much more to the fine art of oral pleasuring. Let me take you to a knowledge of the craft...

How one gets to the act of lick-sucking (to coin a word that will satisfy all genders and persuasions) varies among the participants. For some, it is a

mutual sixty-nining: each partner sucking the other's genitalia. Others kneel adoringly before the god who receives without any reciprocation. Sucking and licking are universal. Wives do it with husbands and vice versa, men with boy friends, strangers with each other, slaves with their masters, fuck-buddies, tricks, johns, queers together.

In any case, the best lick-sucking begins away from the crotch. Foot worship, massage, licking, and caressing of arms and legs are all ways to begin. I prefer to start by rubbing the feet of my fully clothed partner, slowly disrobing him as I *earn* my way to his sexual center. It is a slow, deliberate process.

Use your mind and your body as you perform your sexual magic. Be slow and relaxed. Your partner will feel the sensations in his or her limbs all the way to his crotch. They are signals to his genitals that the sacred rite has begun. If you find yourself moving too quickly, retreat and begin again.

If your boy is moving too quickly, make him start over. It is your pleasure, the pleasure of your staff or cunt that is important. Let time rule nothing in *this* moment. Let the sex organ command. Let the god reign.

I've removed my partner's shoes and socks, massaged his feet, rubbed his legs, waist, and crotch gently. His pants keep me from the intimacy I desire, even as they increase the sensuality of what is happening. I strain to get my hands under the cloth, next to the flesh I so desire.

My partner removes his shirt. I see the line of hair that leads to the center of my devotion. I lick the hairs that mark his maturity. I brush his nipples. I know how well they are connected to his man-root. Our long history of play has taught me that his tits are actually like little cocks. They are buttons that fill his rod with power, that stiffen it in excitement.

I brush my nose across the bulge beneath his pant's zipper. My lord, I seek you. I desire you. I worship you.

So very much of good lick-sucking is rooted in the mind. Attitude counts as much here, perhaps even more, as technique. Use your imagination to see yourself giving satisfaction, giving devotion. Allow yourself to surrender to the beauty, the power, the manliness of prick or the womanhood of the goddess. See it as knowing, as life-giving, joy-inducing, as divine.

My partner loosens his belt buckle. I lift my head, seeking, lusting for the head that will command me. I nuzzle into his crotch hair, silently pleading for my cock-master to let me view him. He signals for me to remove his pants. Now he is as naked as I. Each of us will worship his cock in our own way.

I move closer to his penis. I stare at its ooze of pre-cum. The odor of his masculinity reaches my nose. I inhale it happily, savoring its aroma, letting the air-born scent of it fill my lungs, my body. I am his cock-slave.

East coast wisdom warns us never to put a cock in our mouth without first covering it with a condom. West coast safe-sex guidelines are more liberal and dispense with the need for a latex sheath during cocksucking. I will usually suck a naked cock, but always rinse it with my spit as I do. The lube from my

mouth makes sucking and swallowing easier and kills (I think) many of the germs that I should fear. (In any case, consult your physician for the guidelines you feel you need to follow.)

I hold my head in front of the head I will savor. My partner lets me pause there, *makes* me pause there. I long to bathe that prick with my tongue, to swallow its fleshy power. Instead, knowing that patience and slow speed are our allies, he sends me back to his feet.

I obey the commands of my cock-master, for his pleasure is my delight. Once again, my tongue massages his toes, his soles, his ankles. It is a steady process, the prize getting nearer with each lick.

My mouth nears his upper thighs. I circle his staff with my tongue. I nuzzle into the crotch hairs on either side of his testicles. I kiss his balls. I kiss them gently, quietly, slowly. My lips are tender and dry. It is a moment of deep respect, silent praise, of pleading to be allowed to come nearer.

He opens his legs and I lick under his testicles, my tongue straining to taste his ass opening, the musk of his anus. I know, too, that here is the root of his root. There is more cock to please than what we see. The shaft is sensitive and responsive behind the testicles as well as in front.

His nuts lie on my nose as I use my tongue to clean and excite my partner. I lift his ball sac with my face, jostling his sperm-makers gently. I want to make his gonads boil with pleasure.

For his part, my partner strokes his own man-meat. His rituals are different than mine, but his worship the same. Sometimes, after the passion and the play have ended, we share the meaning, the feelings, the insights that our sex rites give us. He's never told me his thoughts during these moments of cock-worship, but I do know how I feel when a slave sucks me.

When I'm the top, my focus moves to my prick as I stroke it slowly, squeezing its thickness, pulling on its smooth power. I ooze pre-cum and use it to lubricate my dick head. I pinch the ridge of skin where my foreskin used to be, just under my cock's head, on the bottom side of the shaft.

I lift my hips slightly, letting the boy nuzzle the prick behind my balls. I squeeze his head with my thighs. I see my cock stand straight in my fist. Every ounce of me strains to pour itself into the pleasure center that I have become. I call the gods of the universe to see this god come alive, to take pleasure in seeing my cock's pleasure. I, the cock-master, become the cock's slave as well, as I worship my own rod. It is so much me and sometimes so much other...

I lie back and let my slave's devotion continue. I remind him to play with my tits, to lick my nuts. We are one in this cocksucking.

Now, though, I am worshipper. My partner wants me to focus on his tits. I obey and raise my body so that I can please them. I will suck them, in much the same way I will suck his rod. I will draw them, one at a time (Oh, for another mouth to be able to do both at once!) into my mouth. I will caress them with my tongue.

I will squeeze each of them between my thumb and forefinger, rolling them

carefully. I will lightly pinch them between my finger nails, careful not to exceed his pleasure thresholds, careful not to be too light either. I rub my abdomen on his cock. I dedicate all of my body to his pleasure. I align my legs with his, rub his feet with mine. He pushes my head towards his crotch, a silent and welcome command to gorge myself on his man-root.

I begin our ritual of tongue-bathing his penis. I lick from the base upwards in broad slow strokes. I cannot go too slowly here. I savor each centimeter of man-root. When my tongue reaches the ridge of his cockhead I retreat back to the base and retrace my path.

I am careful to move from side to side. I strain to lick every cell of the skin of his shaft. My licking changes to kissing, my kissing to sucking, my sucking to *ever* so gently biting, pulling what looseness of flesh I can find.

The actions are similar with the female anatomy. Gently probe, suck, lick, kiss. Use your fingers to softly open her entrance to paradise. Don't rush to tongue-fuck. Instead go slowly, methodically, purposefully.

I trace the edge of his cock-crown with my tongue, paying attention to rim it in slow short strokes. I cuddle his cockhead in my mouth, explore his piss slit. I crave his fluids. The taste of pre-cum, only a hint of his life-giving juice.

I want him to piss, but he won't, not now, not when he is this excited. I will assuage my thirst for him by obedience. His pleasure, his will are my only desires.

I strain to combine all sorts of mouth and body movements with actions of mind and spirit. Slow, practiced variety gives the best pleasure. My reward will be to enclose the cockhead with my mouth, to hold my god.

My partner moves his legs together. I part my legs so to kneel astride him. His knees can play with my balls and cock, teasing them, knocking them, giving them pain or pleasure as he pleases. I am surrendered to him. All that matters is the god-cock and the two tits.

I do my best to remember to use my whole self in this pleasuring. It's easy enough to use one's finger, mouth, tongue. I try to include my legs, my chest, my chin.

The man with the cock I adore pinches my tits roughly, squeezing them between his finger nails, twisting pain into their tenderness. I groan.

Imagination is part of the pleasuring as well. I see the pain in my mind's eye. I sense the pleasure in my own cock. I visualize both as I mentally offer them to my cock-master. They are gifts from slave to cock-god. I imagine the feelings as light, as power, as electricity, as they move from me to him.

My energy touches him, excites him. He receives my gift of power, my surrender of self to him. Let him take what he wishes: my tits, my cock, my balls, my being. I am a cocksucker and need nothing but prick to control me in this moment.

Experience has shown me the practical wisdom of Eastern thought. There are energy centers throughout our bodies and, as I suck and lick, I visualize my centers opening and joining with those of my partner. I send my energies

to him. I open myself to receive his.

I pause above the prick I worship. My lips encircle its head. My tongue rubs the cock slit, circumnavigates the ridge of the crown. A hand pushes me down onto the holy shaft.

"Suck, boy," I am commanded.

I take a breath and slowly descend onto the cock, opening my throat to receive its length. I pause at its base until my body revolts in its need for air. I raise my head, pulling the cock with me, until I reach the crown. Again and again, I repeat the action. I bob up and down as I fuck my face.

I suck. To do so is my delight. But it is more than that. As I suck, I caress the cock with my tongue, play with his tits with my fingers, direct my being to his pleasure, send my energy to bathe him, excite him, please him.

I am filled with a silent chant of praise, of adoration, of desire.

My partner is cut so there is no opportunity to play with a foreskin. When an uncut man (a rare and happy find) lies in front of me, there are special movements for him. Suck the skin, nibbling gently, pulling it over his cock head. Slip my tongue into the puckered folds. Suck the skin into my mouth, licking between the head and the foreskin that surrounds it, or gently spread the hood with my fingers, caressing with tongue or finger the cock head within.

I keep my movements slow and deliberate. Less is often more: tiny licks, gentle kisses, soft breaths. I alternate mouth with hand, sucking cock with sucking nuts. Sit astride the prick and rub my ass hairs over it. Tempt my ass with his shaft as I tempt his shaft with my ass. I use my butt cheeks to squeeze the rod, to massage it, to give it pleasure.

Touch your mistress, as she allows, with your cock. Rub your prick or your leg in her pubic hair. Press hair against hair.

Play with tits, nuzzle armpits, crotch, the tender spots on the upper thighs, behind the ears, the knees. Always return to pleasure his or her sex center. Remember that your lord or lady is more than a cock, more than a cunt, that the rest of the body is filled with zones that will stimulate his or her genitals, even as you give pleasure to the other parts.

Don't rush to bring on an orgasm. Instead, listen to his body's signals. Is he breathing fast, thrusting his hips forward, groaning? Keep him on the edge of ecstasy as long as you can. Let him float in bliss.

If you are in control of the situation, make time for "breaks." Let your worshipper come up for air, rest from the sucking in short bits, to return to the task in a relaxed but dedicated frame of mind.

There comes a time, of course, when all things must come to an end. Happily, this ending will be well worth it. Let your cock-slave know where and how you want him to be when you climax. My partner has me mount myself astride his hips. I play with his tits, while he strokes both of our rods to

ecstasy.

You may wish him to lick you in a special area, to stroke you to climax, or to fuck him or him you. I prefer to come while being rimmed, spewing my jism across my boy's chest. Some masters want there to be simultaneous orgasms; others don't want their slaves to come at all.

When the sacred moment comes, your cock will prove that it has a head (and a will) of its own. There's no need for instruction here, except of course to remind you to enjoy it.

In the bottom role, continue to stimulate your partner as he shoots, making the touching more delicate if necessary. Imagine the orgasm as being energetic as well as physical and emotional. Unite your energy to that of the cock you are servicing.

When the climax has passed, let your top rest and enjoy the "glow". Don't rush to disturb the feelings, let them flood him or her without being bothered, until your partner stirs and bids you to his command. Be helpful in cleaning up, in drying him, in helping him to come down.

Attitude is so much the basis of good sex, and of good lick-sucking. I remember a particularly good orgasm recently, with a hot young man in his early twenties. When the sucking was done and I lay there with his white jism on my hairy stomach, he apologized for having gotten me "dirty".

This is the bane of our culture: that sex is dirty, evil, meant to bring shame and guilt. Such are the lies that we live with, such are the lies that leather folk must confront every day.

We have to face them in our own selves as well. What we think about dicks, vaginas, clits, sex, sperm, our bodies is deeply rooted in who we are. Be clear on the beauty of your personhood, and lick-sucking will be the joy it was created to be. Embrace the act as giving, sharing, clean, wholesome, beneficial, even, if you will, holy, sacred, divine. Such positive attitudes will do a great deal more than any techniques you'll ever be taught.

Sexual activity is uniquely personal from partner to partner. Techniques vary, desires are diverse. Take time to learn your body and the bodies of those with whom you play.

Show this article to your favorite sex partner and experiment with its instructions. Feel free to discuss what appeals to you and what does not. Share with him or her the source of your desire, and the assumptions about sex, safety, pleasure, and service that make you tick.

I haven't said it enough: Have fun. There's no right way, no wrong way to please another. Learn what works and what doesn't, and enjoy. After all, pleasure is really what cocks and cunts are all about.

Have a great time practicing. I wish I could show you in person what a great gift a tongue can be. Short of that, show your friend what a great lick-sucker you can be. We'll all be better off if you do.

Chapter 11

The Deep End

Let's Dare to Talk About It.

Nonviolence is fundamental to good leather sex.

If there is anger, intimidation, coercion, or permanent injury in a scene, then I don't want to be part of it. Safety, sanity, and consent easily separate fantasy from fatality.

Leather folks aren't wimps. A weekend at Hellfire's annual Inferno run is ample demonstration that at least some leather men are able to give it and/or take it. In this case, "it" is some pretty heavy action. Heavy action isn't violent.

Violence, on the other hand, doesn't have to appear "heavy" either. The continuous or long-term application of even minor forms of pain (psychological or physical) can be detrimental and injurious.

Unfortunately, it's a fact that there is violence. We need to work to eliminate it. Please bear with me as I write about an important but seldom discussed issue: Domestic Violence.

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. If you're anything like me, you don't know a lot about domestic violence. In all my years, I've only met two people caught in that kind of ugliness.

Bound to a lover by financial, physical, and career ties, Rich (not his real name) was harassed, beaten, berated, and practically enslaved. He saw no way out of his prison: trapped by drugs and alcohol, beaten by an overpowering lover, coerced (at times at gun point), he was depressed but saw no where to go. I offered a safe haven for him, but was turned down because of his fear of retribution against him *and* against me.

Part of the following information comes from a press release from the National Leather Association. For further information or help, contact the Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council (800-800-0350) or the National Leather Association, or any of the hot line services in your neighborhood.

Domestic violence is not an easy topic to deal with because it can bring up a lot of complicated emotions in all of us: pain, shame, betrayal, guilt, or fear. But we need to understand and recognize the signs of abuse, the cycle of abuse (buildup, confrontation, and honeymoon), and know what resources

are available to us. Anyone can be subject to abuse: a person's size, gender, or specific sex role (e.g. top/bottom, butch/femme) is irrelevant.

Domestic Violence is a pattern of intentional intimidation for the purpose of dominating, coercing, or isolating another without his/her consent. Abuse tends to be cyclical in nature and escalates over time.

What are the signs of domestic violence?

"Physical:" Does your partner ever hit, choke, slap, or otherwise physically hurt you outside the context of a consensual SM scene? Has he/she ever restrained you against your will, locked you in a room, or used a weapon of any kind? Are you afraid of your partner?

"Sexual:" Rape and forced sexual acts are not part of consensual SM. Battering is not "agreed" upon; there is an absence of "safe words". Are you confused about when a scene begins and ends? Does your partner ever ignore your safe words or pressure you not to use them?

Has he/she ever violated your limits? Do you feel "trapped" in a specific role? Does your partner constantly criticize your performance, withhold sex as a means of control, or ridicule you for the limits you set? Do you feel obliged to have sex? Does your partner use sex to make up after a violent incident?

"Isolation:" Does your partner isolate you from friends, family, or groups?

"Property:" Has your partner ever destroyed objects or threatened pets?

"Economic:" Does your partner limit access to work or to material resources? Has he/she ever stolen from you or run up debts?

"Emotional/Psychological:" Are you or your partner emotionally dependent upon one another? Does your relationship swing back and forth between a lot of emotional distance and being very close? Is your partner constantly criticizing you, humiliating you, and generally undermining your self-esteem?

Does your partner use scenes to express/cover up anger and frustration? Do you feel you can't discuss with your partner what is bothering you?

Answers to those questions can help put your relationships, or those of your friends, into proper perspective. If you are a "beaten partner", there are things that I'd like you to know as well:

No one has a right to abuse you. You are not responsible for the violence.

You are not alone. Connect with other survivors.

There are many reasons for staying in abusive relationships—fear of (or feelings for) the abuser, and a lack of economic or emotional resources. If you stay, help is still available. Find out about shelters, support groups, counselors, antiviolence programs and 24 hour crisis lines in your area. Ask a friend to help you make these calls.

Plan a strategy in case you have to leave quickly. Line up friends and family in case of emergency.

Battering is a crime. Find out about your legal rights and options. You can get the court to order the person to stop hurting you through an Order for Protection (OFP) or a Harassment Restraining Order. You do not need a law-

yer.

The majority of us aren't involved in domestically violent relationships, but that doesn't mean that they don't affect us. Here's what you ought to know and do:

Realize that domestic violence does exist, and it exists in the SM community as well.

Don't blame survivors for the violence. Hold batterers accountable.

Listen to any person who has the courage to talk about his/her experience. Keep all information confidential. Be supportive.

Understand that leaving is difficult. Let the person make his/her own choices. Support the process of making choices, even if you don't agree with the person's choices.

Be a resource—help find safe housing and legal advocacy, contact community resources, and offer emotional support.

Let me add to that list: Be a responsible and responsive friend. It neither costs nor hurts to listen.

Financial Aspects of Slavery.

As I scan the leather landscape, most slave applicants are broke, and most masters are far from able to support their imaginations. That appraisal was seconded by Master Panman, publisher of "Collars", a newsletter "for men interested in consensual slave ownership," (\$3.00 will get you a sample issue, write to 1122 E. Pike St. PMB 947, Seattle, WA 98122). When I talked with him about "brokering", he quickly pointed out that no one would pay the thousands of dollars that such an arrangement would cost.

I once negotiated with a man in LA who couldn't find a master in that wide open town. He was in debt to the syndicate. His apparently real desire to serve was completely stymied by a "bill collector" who regularly met him in the parking lot of the factory where he worked for minimum wage. By the time the collector "cashed" his check, he had nothing besides mere living expenses.

Not every form of slavery is sexual, consensual, or enjoyable. I figured that for \$4,000 or \$5,000 I could have bought the debt and owned the boy. Most writers, myself included, don't have that kind of money to throw around. So ended the negotiations. As you can see, slave searching quickly enters into stark realism when the discussion turns to money.

Let me continue the discussion with another excerpt from my "Expectations and Regulations concerning Voluntary Servitude:

"Finances. Upon entry into servitude, the slave will turn practical and actual (but not legal) control of his personal resources over to the master for administration.

"Assets will remain the property of the slave. Nothing in this section is meant to imply that the master is using the relationship for his own self-aggrandizement. Similarly, this is not a 'free ride' for the slave. The master will administer the slave's finances in such a way as to increase their value and

provide for the slave's present and future needs.

"The slave will support himself and provide for the master's pleasure and prosperity. The master will not accept the role of providing for the slave—as that would, in fact, make him the slave's slave, a role the master is not willing to accept. As the master's property, the slave will not be allowed to become a drain on the master's finances, but rather an asset to them."

For starters, there is the underlying premise that relationships ought to be entered into slowly. The so-called master who requires immediate full financial disclosure, as well as the slave wannabe who expects a sugar daddy, are both dreaming. Financial entanglements ought to be made with extreme caution and only after the relationship has begun to stand the test of time. Professional advice from a lawyer or accountant is not uncalled for.

As easily as Patrick has fit into my household, there have been some difficulties concerning finances.

Patrick came to me shortly after leaving another master, one who had taken advantage of his trust. In the end, Patrick lost several thousand dollars. The loss might have been larger if Patrick hadn't sensed some chicanery underfoot and called a halt to the process.

So it was that Patrick felt it necessary set aside a store of cash for himself after he came to me. It was "insurance" against the possibility that I would leave him high, dry, and broke. When I accidentally found the hidden cash, I hit the ceiling. Happily, we resolved it to our mutual satisfaction.

I strongly advise those considering master/slave relationships to consider alternatives and to test their commitments before tying the financial knot. Divorce courts are ample testimony to the problems of disassembling households.

Master and slave need to come up with a realistic understanding about money.

Slaves can't function without bus fare, parking fees, lunch money. Monthly expenses for food, housing, medical care, transportation, clothing, and entertainment aren't slight. The slave who expects his master or mistress to care for him or her is suffering from a delusion. The master who thinks that owning a slave costs nothing is living with his head in very strange clouds.

What kind of guidelines might we expect to use? How about "Take it slowly, one day at a time." Over the course of months, whatever changes and co-mingling of funds is necessary will become evident. In addition to a reasonable pace, honesty needs to be maintained. Understand how much things really cost, know who is actually responsible, and plan accordingly.

It's nice to think that Patrick slavishly bestows his paycheck on me. The implications of that, though, is that I'm stuck with his bills too. If I lay claim to his money, he can lay claim to my being responsible. If he lives under my roof, he becomes obligated to help pay for that roof.

There are ways to cope with questions of finance. What it takes to arrive at financial answers is honest and realistic planning. Discuss the implications

of commitment. How does it affect debt, savings, and day-to-day living? No master can be there with an open wallet every minute of the day. No slave can expect that his or her master will be there with cash every time a bill comes due.

If you're negotiating, ask about budgeting, saving for the future, and eliminating debt. If the slave won't be working outside the home, how will he or she be supported? Know what contingencies there are for emergencies, for comfort, and for the future.

I know a man, now very successful and very independent, who, as a youth, was kept caged and naked in the master's apartment. That arrangement fell apart when the master suddenly died and the slave was cast out by the estate. Penniless, uneducated, without any work history, it was only when a few friends of the late master came to the slave's financial aid that a totally impossible situation was resolved.

Dreams of servitude might get you off, but the piper must be paid. Plan now to have the necessary wherewithal.

Healthy SM

AIDS has given a whole new dimension to sexual activity. Just when effective birth control and modern medicine gave us a way to avoid unwanted pregnancy and cure sexually transmitted diseases, dangerous sex reared its ugly head another way. So ended free love.

Gay friends died left and right, while many, many survivors embraced either safer-sex or no-sex as a lifestyle. Fifteen years later, medical advances are beginning to change AIDS from terminal to chronic. We're all breathing easier as the plague becomes more and more manageable.

Unfortunately, that doesn't mean that it's over.

I became a leather man just after AIDS had begun to do its worst. As we look around today, it's obvious that AIDS decimated the gay leather community. It's most likely that it wasn't leather activity, per se, that was responsible. The "good old days" of the 60's were filled with unprotected sex, rampant drug and alcohol abuse, and unsanitary practices that would have killed most anyone.

Those of us who survived, learned, and it's important that we remember the lessons we've learned. I'm not going to go into all the details of safer-sex, but I will emphasize the need for it. Simply put, play with every partner as if they are all infected. Never share toys that aren't sterilized between uses, never do anything that transfers bodily fluids between individuals, and don't endanger your health with immune-suppressive activity, such as drunkenness and drug abuse.

What, then, are slaves and masters to do?

My "Expectations and Regulations" spells it out this way: "Once the slave is the master's property, the master will be responsible to keep him as healthy as possible. The master will want to keep his property at full value and so will not command or treat the slave in a way that jeopardizes or diminishes

his value. A healthy slave is a valuable one."

Not everyone looks at it this way, of course. We frequently see ads that seek "HIV negative" slaves or hear talk about using condoms only "until your slavery is permanent."

In both cases, there is the, as yet unspoken, but all too obvious, idea that there are conditions within which safer sex practices can be ignored. That kind of thinking only leads to eventual tragedy.

I will except married heterosexual couples in a monogamous relationship, but other than that, there is no reason to exchange bodily fluids.

I can hear some of my gay friends shaking their heads that I don't include monogamous homosexual relationships as well. There are those who say that two HIV-negative men can get it on safely without being "safe" or that two HIV-positive men are already infected, so there's no use in playing safely, but I disagree with both opinions.

It's a matter of common sense and "risk management". I don't think we can eliminate all risk. The only completely safe sex is no sex, just as the only completely safe kind of travel is to stay home. If you do that, then you can't blame your accidents on traveling. They will happen. On this planet, death is the only way out. That doesn't mean, though, that we ought to be courting death or doing things that make it more likely to occur.

I exempted monogamous married couples from the bodily fluid restriction only because procreation is something they may want to do. Unmarried persons probably aren't going to breed, so they ought to keep their fluids to themselves.

HIV-positive partners run the risk of introducing variant forms of the virus into each other's systems. In as much as HIV mutates easily and, therefore, can adapt. In order to survive various antibodies and drug therapies, we need to eliminate the possibility of introducing new strains of the virus into anyone's body.

Care doesn't mean abstinence. In fact, there are endless erotic possibilities in SM. The vast majority of leather activity is safe, and even the most kinky practices can be made safer with a bit of forethought. The overriding considerations are cleanliness and the use of barriers against the transmission of fluids.

Keeping ropes, slings, whips, gags, dildos, and the like clean is a perfect job for any slave. There's nothing expensive about soap and water. Rinsing insertable toys in bleach (diluted in water at a ratio of one to ten) is highly recommended as well.

Leather toys may not stand up to washing like a butt plug would, but there are ways to disinfect them as well. See "Leather And Latex Care: How To Keep Your Leather And Latex Looking Great," by Kelly Thibault, (ISBN 1-881943-00-3, Daedalus Publishing Co.)

Returning to the idea that "a healthy slave is a valuable one." brings us to considering the possibility of conflict in the master/slave scenario. What

happens if a master wants to fuck his slave without a rubber or if the slave wants it to happen?

There are those, I'm sure, who will say that the master has a right to fuck in any way he desires. I understand the sentiment. Rubbers diminish the intensity of the action. They can be a distraction from the heat of the moment. Some men can't stay erect when they put a rubber on. In spite of those possibilities, condoms prevent infection and thereby save lives.

It's a matter of getting used to them. Try different brands, sizes, and kinds. For a long time, I relied on the free condoms distributed at the bars. They work well and it was easy to grab a handful as I was going home.

I had problems with them, though, in as much as very often they were too tight, so tight, in fact, that more often than not, when I had an orgasm in one, it would be painful. I found ways to avoid that. For one, I would rip off the condom and shoot my load elsewhere and safely. Interestingly, many bottoms enjoyed the sight of my jism squirting onto their chests.

Later I tried a larger size of condom and found they delivered greater pleasure, eliminating the disagreeable tightness. It's a matter of trial and error. Often, too, it's a matter of just getting used to them.

By and large, it all goes back to being responsible.

There are a great many aspects to leather sex: pleasure, authority, sado-masochism, love, dominance, and submission. You get the idea. None of them removes the need to be responsible.

Responsibility is a major attribute between SM players. Without it, the master/slave relationship, or any relationship for that matter, quickly deteriorates and ends. It's a two-way street, too.

The master is such because he accepts responsibility as part of his role. The slave accepts that his master is responsible, though he or she still retains "self-responsibility" as well, even if only to insure that the master's property remains healthy and of great value.

As master, I pass some of my responsibility on to my slave. He is required, for instance, to clean the toys, to buy the condoms, and to put them on me. In the heat of passion, a responsible master might have to remind his or her slave to get a rubber. It's all part of being in a healthy relationship and keeping it that way.

Leather Images and Leather Emotions

Brian writes: "Sir, is leather losing its image? Do you buy it or earn it from your mentor? I always thought the *Drummer-Colt* image was the role. Am I wrong or just lost? Can I have your guidance please?"

Father Alliot, a retired priest who was well into his 90's when I knew him, used to say "*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. The more things change the more they remain the same." So, Brian, relax. Let's look into what you're asking.

The Image of Leather.

Certainly "leather" has changed its image since Marlon Brando portrayed "The Wild One" in 1954. Coming out of the motorcycle scene of the early and mid-fifties, leather was then known as "rough sex" and men who sought such experiences headed for tough bars filled with bikers. There were no *Drummer's* or *Colts* to give an image, no mentors, no clubs, no SM Universities. In spite of the lack, leather "grew," mostly by word of mouth, friend referring friend.

By the late 50's, this "network" of city-contacts was national and even international. There were no dress codes at the leather bars because there were no leather bars. When newcomers ventured to approach the earliest of the "leather men", they were invited to join the party, given suggestions about what they should wear, and over the course of months, shown the ropes.

For the most part, I think that is really the way it still happens. Oh, there are seminars to attend, and clubs to join. You can even find an initiation now and then. The majority of us just got into it one step at a time. I bought my own first vest, made my own first toys: a harness, cuffs, and a hood. My "mentors", Rick and Tom, were more fuck-buddies with whom I played roughly than teachers *per se*. It was mostly a matter, with them, of "I'll top you and then you top me," a kind of every fifteen minute role reversal.

A stranger at Man's Country (a bath house in Chicago) liked my hands, invited me back to his cubicle, trimmed my finger nails, and taught me to fist him. My first bondage scene was in a bath house in Philly where I tied up a

young man (gorgeous as I remember him) for his birthday.

So, you see, things were never as formal and institutionalized as we might be led to believe.

That doesn't mean, though, that there wasn't some structure. Men who were active in the Sixties will tell you about "earning their leathers". Yes, there were times when leather was given as a gift or bestowed as a badge. The stories about being bent over a motorcycle and having all the guys piss on you and your new black jacket do have credence. In many other cases, though, there weren't anywhere near as many theatrics as we imagine.

It really was, in many ways, the work of the written word, and later the published picture, that created the mystique of leather. Face it, we're not all a bunch of Colt models and the greater number of photo scenes in *Drummer* were staged. You're looking at poses, not reality.

That's not to say that reality can't and doesn't spring from our imagination. Jim Bruce, who, for a long time, was a moving force at the annual Hellfire Inferno Runs, tells of writing and showing guys bondage stories at the old Lincoln Baths. When the stories turned his reader on, then they could be brought to life.

The *Drummer*/Colt scene is certainly attractive. There's a Colt calendar hanging in my bathroom, and there has been a new one there every 12 months for years. We all like to imagine ourselves to be like them and to be with them. Luckily, dreamers live forever. But the bars, baths, clubs, classifieds, and phone lines aren't inhabited by models, though, on occasion, a model-like Adonis does show up.

These days too, there are places where you can find all sorts of hot, leather-clad men who only look like they are part of the leather scene. The rough and tough clothing of the Fifties has become everyday wear in America. As fashion, leather and Levis are "in". It's a far cry from bars in the Forties, where suits, ties, and dresses were the expected attire. In fact, early gay activists dressed in white shirts and ties to picket the White House!

So, what about Pere Alliot's French expression? What is the same?

What remains, and what is important, is one's attitude. Real leather is between our ears, so to speak. It is a mindset of rugged individualism, combined with one's self-chosen fetish, tempered by the customs of a subculture, and held together by bonds of mutual esteem. I'm not sure I can write more than that. Leather eludes a strict definition.

Oh, I can spout out things about sadomasochism, cowhide, domination and submission, and the like, but to be too inclusive risks saying nothing; too exclusive denies the wide variety to be found in the scene. I should write "scenes". The longer I remain active in leather, the more I see its incredible diversity. Recently, I've been surprised about how many heterosexuals, for instance, are into leather. My experience had made it seem like a gay vista, but that's only part of the picture.

Leather isn't just leather, either. It's latex, spandex, and uniforms. It can be

painful, as with the long whips, or mild, as in foot worship. It crosses lines of gender, race, economic status, and geography. Check out "Yahoo" on the World Wide Web under BDSM to see how extensive it is on the Internet. Get a copy of the hankie code to see how rainbow-like it can be. The number and variety of fetishes puts Baskin-Robbins to shame.

That's why the *Drummer/Colt* image only tells part of the story. Throw in *Daddy* magazine, *The Leather Journal*, and hundreds of slick mags about mistresses and their slaves. Sure, the Mineshaft and Jewel's are gone, but any of the Eagle bars around the country will give you an idea of what leather is like. If that is confusing, it's only because of the incredible diversity of human tastes.

In leather, after all, it takes complements to play: top and bottom, sadist and masochist, extrovert and introvert, etc. They can all qualify as being into leather. In fact, the only reliable definition is probably self-defining. You're into leather when you admit you're into leather.

Some, of course, decry that situation. We all have our tastes. I was once told, after having been published in Chicago as a leather columnist for almost three years, that I didn't know anything about leather. The speaker was opposed to the relaxed dress code that allowed bare chests. He felt, and here I'm assuming something, that his style of hat-to-boots encasement in cowhide was much more appropriate and "real leather."

Well, I think that brings us to a point where the image becomes unreal. There is no Mr. Benson bringing boys home from a bar forever, though we head out to those bars every night looking for him. On the other hand, each of us is a bit Mr. Benson, a part his boy Jamie.

How we live those fantasies and make them real determines whether or not leather is losing its image.

As I see it, we're not losing an image, just finding others, coloring the picture a little more brightly, perhaps more subtlety, certainly with broader strokes. Leather is what you make of it.

Leather and Emotions

I received a wonderful letter the other day. While trying my best to preserve my reader's anonymity, let me share some of his reflections, interspersed with my own thoughts:

"It had been a long hard week, and my frustrations were building up inside of me, seemingly centered in my groin. I was restless and had an itch that needed to be scratched, so I went to the Eagle."

"Almost immediately, a tall, dark, bearded man (exactly the type that makes me start to salivate) came over and bought me a drink." The direct method is always so much faster.

"I'm not much of a talker with strangers, and apparently, neither was he. I was soon in heat for this man, but surmised by his full leather outfit and his

attitude that he was a great deal more experienced than I. Still, I wanted him badly... so, when he asked me home, I agreed, after some internal wrangling.

"What would he expect of me? Would I be able to do what he wanted? Would it hurt? Would it feel good? Yes, I know I should have told him I was inexperienced, but that is 20/20 hindsight operating. Besides, he told me later that I looked too hot, and he just knew by looking at me that I would be fabulous sex (So much for his insight!). His point was that no mature guy in his 40's is *that* inexperienced."

To continue his story: "He took me to his place, and right into his dark playroom. He told me to strip and, when I was naked, he made me kneel in front of him and lick his boots while he took a short whip and started to beat me. It was way too much, too intense, too quick. The situation was rapidly getting out of hand for me.

"I started to get up and he slapped me down, and then he got out this enormous dildo and tried to work it into my ass. Finally, he started to talk to me and told me that he was going to fist fuck me. I didn't know if this was part of a game, or if he was serious, but I began to freak as I realized I was in way over my head. I looked up at him and begged him to stop, and told him exactly what the problem was."

"Jack, he was a credit to the leather community. He immediately stopped everything, gathered me up, wrapped me in a blanket, and took me over to a sofa and sat me down. He got me a drink, then insisted I talk to him and tell him everything. Oh, Jack, I was so embarrassed and mortified. Here he thought he was going to get this evening of hot sex, and instead ended up playing Dear Abby. I felt so bad for him. We talked for a while, and by then, of course, he was totally out of the mood to do anything..."

"To his credit, he was very nice to me, and he even said that he thought I was even hotter in his eyes now exactly because I was so inexperienced."

There are so many surprises in the world. It's true that many of us with experience like people who have little or none. It's a shame that our experience puts beginners off as much as it does.

You see, it was fortunate that my reader went home with someone with experience. It seems that, even though they both made some errors in judgment, the night worked out really well.

In this scenario, there was a definite lack of sexual gratification, but there is more to leather than sex. That may be hard to believe but it's true. That itch in the groin is only a symptom of our greater need to be loved, held, appreciated, understood, accepted, and included. Yes, there is a need to get our gonads off, but really, the other needs are much more important.

My reader added: "Still, I doubt I will ever see the man again." I find that unfortunate. Maybe they should see each other again, especially now they know more about each other and can avoid the assumptions that got them into trouble.

On the other hand, maybe they've found out that their fantasies don't

match after all, even if the looks are as hot as can be. So much for telling books by the cover.

There's another point of information that ought not to be missed. I usually avoid the more controversial aspects of SM, but this fairly shouts at us from this letter: "He ended up playing Dear Abby."

The beauty of SM is the release it can bring. Leather is therapeutic in many ways, and it's important to allow those special moments of release to happen. I walk a very thin line here.

It's important that we not play therapist, "play Dear Abby," or play God. Real psychological work takes time and expertise. Short of those three roles, though, the play room presents an incredible opportunity to tune into another person and touch them—as they touch you—in very important and intimate ways.

I remember a guy who was serving me in my dungeon. We had already arranged that I would fist him. During our play, we took a short break and I asked him how he became involved in gay sex and in sadomasochism.

His answer was surprising. It went back to his childhood. The son of man who deserted his mother before he was born, my friend was shifted from relative to foster home to orphanage. It was there that he was raped by an older boy. He went on to tell me about his first "lover" who protected him in the orphanage in exchange for the exclusive use of my friend's young (and I mean young) ass.

Needless to say, I was dumbstruck by the answer. He had revealed so much more of himself to me than simply a naked ass to a fist.

Later, as he lay on the bed and I fucked him, he began to cry. Through his tears he repeated, "Fuck me, Daddy. Fuck me." I had become his never-known father. He was the boy in the orphanage and I was a surprised observer of a world of feelings and frustrations held deeply within his heart.

As I thrust my cock into him, I called him a good boy and did my best to affirm him, to let him somehow touch the dad he never knew. It happened, and then it passed. We never had sex again. We never talked about it.

But something deep had happened. And like my reader who found himself wrapped in a blanket on the sofa, it happens much more than we think, especially among men and women of leather experience.

There's a lot more to all this than meets the eye. Explore, experiment, be willing to try. Rather than having all your worst fears come true, the overwhelming statistics point to the fact that the worst will *not* happen.

Chapter 13

Ends and Options

Mom says that, “All good things must come to an end.” That applies to even the best relationships, and even those sealed by words like, “‘til death do us part,” eventually end in one way or another. Too often, relationships linger long past the healthy, robust stages that make them enjoyable, and well into doldrums and boredom.

Ending Slavery

If you're thinking that slavery is forever, you are certainly thinking of an *ideal* situation. I would suggest, though, that you turn back to the beginning of this book. You probably don't remember the sentence, “I'm not really writing about slavery... I'm writing about a condition better called *voluntary servitude*,” but I did write that.

Since it's voluntary, it can be ended at any time by either party. That applies equally to both the dominant and the submissive partner. I know many slaves have the idea that because they're slaves, they can no longer make any choices. My reaction is “Bull shit.” When the slave is in an abusive, irrational, or non-positive relationship, he needs to use his common sense and get out of it.

Unfortunately, there are people who call themselves masters who don't deserve the title. I was going to write “*too many* masters,” but the truth is that even one is too many! I recently heard—and this is for real—of a master who ordered his slave to slash a neighbor's tires. I don't know what the slave was thinking when he followed those orders, but he was wrong to do it. No master is above the law, be it legal or moral, and no slave should use a master's commands as an excuse to do wrong.

I mention that to point out that there may be reasons, good reasons, to end a relationship. Breaking up, of course, is hard to do. I wish that none of us had to go through the trauma, but probabilities are high that most of us will, at least until we settle down with the right partners and learn how to grow and change together.

Basic problems can be overcome with regular communication. Each of you has to make a commitment to honestly express your thoughts and feel-

ings in non-confrontational ways whenever necessary. In my household, I hold a weekly session with Patrick to see if anything needs to be discussed. Most times, of course, I just ask the question, he answers in the negative and we continue on with whatever happens next, which in most cases is sex.

With Michael, I have no set timetable for discussions, but each of us chatters and rambles enough about our mental and emotional states that there is less need to make it into an official meeting, though, at times, one or the other of us has said, "We need to discuss this issue." More than once, we have sought the advice and facilitation of a professional counselor.

When I was slave to Master Lynn, who is among the most reserved of my friends and partners, on occasion, I would simply ask for permission to express myself in order to discuss what I felt was a rough moment in our relationship. This always led to a healthy discussion and a greater understanding of each other.

As each partner changes, and we all do, our relationships need to adjust as well. There are lots of things that affect the quality of our relationships. Anxiety, disease, career, anger, obligations, and the limits of time are only a few.

On the other hand, I think we're too quick to accept current wisdom that all relationships must cool off eventually. They cool off because we let them.

Here, then, are some ways to keep your relationship working well:

1. **Introspection.** We arrive at adolescence with a lot of cultural, emotional, intellectual, and physical baggage that is helpful, neutral, or detrimental to the full realization of our individual and collective maturity as a person and as a species. I'm not going to go into all the psychological processes that are at our disposal to overcome these handicaps, but I will say that until we understand our feelings, their sources, and how to eliminate them or use them to our advantage, we will be mired in strictures that stifle.

The changes to which I allude are never quick, nor are they easy or superficial. Indeed, we may never fully achieve them, but knowing about them and dealing with them in constructive ways is necessary before fulfillment can be approached. Needless to say, relationship issues often predominate the list of "bags" that impede our happiness.

Know yourself, know why you are the way you are, and grow from there.

2. **Communication.** Talking is good for the one who listens and the one who speaks. Another's perspective can help to clarify our own and, listening to our own words, we can reveal much to ourselves. As difficult as it is to engage in meaningful dialogue, it is imperative that we do so.

Find neutral, nonthreatening ways to share your ideas, your feelings, your fears, and your dreams with your partner. Talk about your relationship and all that entails (sex, finances, social life, etc.), but be advised, it's best not to talk about serious topics in the bedroom.

If you think you can't tell it to your partner, find ways to tell it to someone who can listen and help. I'm not talking about gossip, bad-mouthing, or com-

plaining. I'm talking about your real feelings, phobias, hang-ups, as well as your dreams, your fantasies, and your aspirations.

Share them as coming from within yourself. It's not a matter of saying, "You make me feel this way." Recognize that you and you alone are in charge of your emotions, even if, at times, your emotions seem to be in charge of you.

Learn to dialogue in nonthreatening ways. Learn to listen as well, without getting all bent out of shape by the truth as your partner sees it. If things in the dialogue get out of control, recognize what's happening and take a break. If things are difficult enough to warrant it, seek the professional help of a counselor and/or mediator.

3. Experimentation. Here's the perfect opportunity for a whole list of my mother's clichés: "Nothing ventured, nothing gained. It takes two to tango. What's good for the goose is good for the gander. Share and share alike. Try it; you might like it. How do you know you don't like it if you haven't tried it?"

This idea may apply more to those moving into a master/slave relationship than it does to those already in one, but since I'm trying to cover lots of bases, I'll keep it here.

Remember that experimentation is only that. Allow yourself to see what it's like without feeling you have to make a long-term commitment to always doing it, or even ever doing it again. If you don't like it, fine, you've learned something. If you do, well, then all the better.

Experimentation doesn't have to be "whole hog" either. A little bit of bondage, a little bit of tit play, or a little bit of whatever you think will turn you on can indicate future possibilities. If it works in a small way, then you're ready for more, if not, give it up as a good lesson.

Every failed experiment is a learning experience leading to success.

A gentleman recently shared that he thought maybe "going all the way" was necessary. I assured him that was never the case. One small step at a time. Ample time given to evaluation of your progress is much to be preferred over rushing ahead and expending huge amounts of time and energy, only to create a disaster.

4. Recognition. Repression and denial are the enemies of a good life. Recognize the truth, then find constructive ways to deal with it.

I remember when I was in the throes of marriage counseling prior to my divorce. I had spent years trying to be "straight". Finally, my therapist let me in on his secret: "When a client says one thing and does another, I always listen to what they do." My persistent lust for men and active searching for gay sex spoke volumes about my real self. As mother says, "Actions speak louder than words."

Once I recognized my real self and began to accept myself, the way became clear for me to live a real life. The transition was neither easy nor cheap, but it certainly has made me a happier, more fulfilled, and a more real person.

5. Commitment. A healthy relationship takes perseverance. It takes time

and a lot more than just wishing. Talking about it is a good start, but if all you do with your partner is talk, rest assured that all the hot air isn't going to do a bit of good.

Take the time to achieve your goals. Don't fool yourself about it: Taking time means making time. Rearrange your schedule so that there is the quality time needed to keep your relationship robust. It's too easy to let your relationship slide. Your primary relationship must be the most important thing in your life. If it's not, then recognize that it's not primary.

All that is to say that relationships don't have to end, if we find ways to keep them healthy. Nonetheless, statistics show that most Master/slave relationships will end. Sometimes the slave *will* end it. In many cases, though certainly not all, it is the Master who will end the relationship.

This can place a hardship on the slave, of course, since more often than not, it will be he or she who has to move, who has limited finances, and who now has to adapt to living on his or her own once more. On the other hand, if Patrick were to leave me, I'd have to start cleaning, cooking, shopping, and laundering again—things I haven't done in years!

Over time, I've modified relationships with many slaves. My first slave, Steven, became my lover and, when that happened, we agreed to end our SM activity. Five years later, we ended our relationship as lovers and became friends. My second slave, Dave, was a long distance, part-time slave. When I moved to Chicago, the distance became too great to maintain our relationship so we agreed to end it.

My next slave, Al, fell in love with my friend Master Vince. When Vince informed me of the "problem", it was easily solved. After some haggling, I signed Al's contract over to Vince.

I could go on with examples.

My contract with Patrick, as you may have noticed, has a specific termination date. It is that way in order to assure that it can be mutually changed periodically. The operative word here is *mutually*. When the contract expires, we once again become two free individuals who are in positions to seek modification of the contract based on the previous year or two years' experience.

Again, such a practice may simply be perfunctory, but at least it allows the opportunity for discussion and change.

When I became Lynn's slave, it was a relatively quick event. He showed me a chain, asked me if I wanted to be his slave, and asked me if I knew what it meant. When I assented, he locked the chain around my neck and the deal was done.

We both came to the moment with a rather full understanding of slavery, somewhat clouded by our mutual affection. Lynn thought it was a "death do us part" deal. I don't know what I thought, except that having gone through a rather difficult divorce, I knew from experience that few relationships were ever that permanent.

Three years later (more or less), I asked to be released from my slavery. In fact I wrote a column about it. Lynn's response was to assure me that he wasn't giving back the gift of myself that I had given him. Though it sounds a bit difficult in the writing, in fact, he was right to insist we continue, and so we did for another two and a half years.

Eventually, though, the contradictions and difficulties of being one man's slave and another man's master were more than I could tolerate. So, I took the opportunity of a walk along the lake with Lynn to ask that we modify the relationship and end my slavery.

I wanted only to end the slavery, not the relationship. The ensuing months proved difficult as we struggled with redefining who we were with each other. We had enough respect for one another—and enough love, I might add—to keep talking. There was pain. There were a few words we wish we hadn't said, but, in the end, we maintained a healthy relationship, now redefined as two masters in the same leather family.

Happily, Lynn eventually met and took a new slave named John, who has brought great joy to his home and to our family. Endings, after all, can be opportunities for beginnings. Change isn't always for the worse.

The pragmatist in me wants to tell the idealist in you to keep your feet on the ground. I remember when two young men came to tell me of their new relationship as master and slave. After too short a time and way too little experience, they were rushing to move in with each other. My counsel was to wait, but "true love" takes counsel from no one. Their breakup a year later was difficult, and both still bear the scars. They'll survive, of course, but it's unfortunate that too often we make unwise choices. "Fools rush in," you know.

All this is to say that, before you enter into a relationship, know how you will exit from it. This is especially important in the realm of finances.

I am thinking, for instance, of a master who spent more than \$40,000 of his slave's credit and savings. When the master decided he no longer wanted the slave, the slave was left with the debt. Something wasn't right about that relationship.

Allow me to emphasize that being responsible is a significant qualification in the master. The slave may take on the obligation to obey, serve, and worship. The master is going to have to be responsible. After all, if he gets the slave's paycheck how is the slave going to save for that rainy day about which my Mom always frets?

This is no illusory fear. Many slaves have found themselves on the street without enough money for the first month's rent and deposit. The most unfortunate ones have found themselves both penniless and unemployed. These situations aren't always the effect of maliciousness or anger, but they are the result of bad planning on someone's part.

If the master may be called negligent for not making provision for the future, the slave can be called foolish, for lack of a better term, for entering into

a relationship with a master who is negligent.

Once again, it's obvious that master/slave relationships are human relationships. What can be said about them applies in most people's lives. Whatever relationship you have is going to prosper or fail based on your ability to communicate, to share, and to plan.

This chapter isn't meant to scare you, but to put your relationships in a context that is real. Now that you've been warned, go to it. And may your mastery and slavery last until... well you know what I mean.

My Lover Wants a Three-Way

My fellow family members get three-ways fairly often. There's no secret about the openness and multiplicity within our leather family. The heading on this section has to do more with a phoned-in question than an anonymous reader asked a few weeks ago.

He questioned how to make open relationships work. Let me review a few of the particulars for those looking to add the variety of plural partners to their sexual agenda.

The first bit of advice is the most important: To thine own self be true. If you want an open relationship, communicate that idea to your partner. If he or she desires one, listen as they communicate their ideas. In either case, though, be sure it's what you want. There's no advantage to opening a relationship unless it's something you both want to do.

If you're a one-person person, that's fine. Be who you are. If you're never again going to be monogamous, that's fine too. Either choice is yours, and it's your life to lead as you see fit. Acquiescing to pressure, one way or the other, only postpones the inevitable: a miserable relationship.

The second "rule" is to be respectful. Respect your partner. That doesn't mean you must agree or give in to his every wish, but you do need to respect his wishes as valid, his ideas as worthy of consideration. Even if you find the ideas repugnant (and you probably won't), that doesn't mean that they don't come from an honestly searching heart. Nor does it mean that he or she doesn't love you, need you, and want to keep you any longer, that the relationship is over, or rocky, or hopeless. Don't allow new ideas to become a reason for you to project your own insecurities into the dialogue.

Self-assurance, a strong self-image on the part of both partners, is what makes open relationships work. New things are always liable to rock our status-quo boats, especially when it comes to sex. New people in relationships can be seen to pose significant threats. Fortunately, though, none of that needs to be the case. You can have an open relationship, as long as it is really open. That doesn't mean that a relationship has to be "wide open". The primary partners have every right to negotiate the terms of openness. Each deserves the right to define the limits of sexual and relational freedom.

For instance, as Lynn's slave, I was free to serve other masters, though I

seldom did, but I was not free to commit myself to them as their possession. Another guideline that we shared is that I must maintain my relationship with my master as primary in terms of his desires. When he wanted me, he got me.

My parameters with Michael are much different. He desires, and I'm glad to give him, quality time between just the two of us. Yes, there is opportunity for three-ways with Michael, but he wants time alone with me as well. I have to make that time for him. He respects my prior relationship with Lynn, whom he likes a whole lot too, and understands that each of us has needs, limits, and expectations.

Each of us has to be conscious of those qualities. There have been times when I had to tell Michael that I'm going to Lynn's. There have been times when Lynn told me to pay more attention to Michael.

Sometimes, it becomes a delicate balancing act. Sometimes you've just got to give a little, but the juggling works because we have effectively communicated our feelings and wishes in the matter.

It's what my therapist friend John calls "rules" of relationships. Having those rules clearly spoken helps to improve communications and clarify expectations. Different couples work out different arrangements. The criteria is that the rules need to work for, and to be acceptable to both parties.

For some, sexual variety is only allowed when both go to a bath house or sex club. It's against the rules to bring anyone "home". For others, there are times when one partner is allowed to go out without the other, and not come home 'til the wee hours. Sometimes, they may both go out, just choosing different bars and neither bringing anyone home. I know one couple of long-standing years that agrees to bring home a third only if both parties find him attractive.

Of course, there are those couples, too, who have an open relationship only if the other doesn't know about it. One will get his extracurricular activity when the other is at work, or when they go on separate vacations, etc. I tend to disagree with that kind of "openness" but I'm not about to judge someone else's relationship. If it works for both of them, more power to them.

And that is the crux of the question. Does it work for both of you?

There is little that is as important as a primary relationship. In all of this openness, keep your primary relationship primary. Don't confuse a night out with a lifetime, a good time with commitment, infatuation with love.

Instead, keep in mind that all of life is hierarchical. There's an order to this creation and keeping things orderly, even relationships, is necessary.

I once dated an attractive young man with whom I was easily infatuated. Doing so upset Michael. Lynn, too, saw that the relationship was detrimental to my lover's peace of mind. As an adult, I can order my time, my affections, and my sexual activities in any way I choose. To do so, though, may become disrespectful of the relationships I already have.

When push came to shove, our friend John counseled Mike and me about our relationship, the expectations that each of us had, and the rules we

needed to live by. My choice was obvious: I wanted to be true to my commitment to Michael. The attractive young man wasn't going to fit in.

I learned a lot about Michael's intense love for me during those few trying weeks. I also learned how important he is to me, and that I need to remember that importance in my day-to-day living. I need to demonstrate his importance to me in ways that he can see and enjoy.

Likewise, Michael knows that my tricking with a good-time guy doesn't lessen my love for him. He knows that my heart is his, even if my penis is giving someone else sexual satisfaction.

Does all this work? Well, nearly seven years with Lynn, six with Michael, and three with Patrick show that it can. I wish you the same success.

Chapter 14

Leather and Love

It's no surprise that we think of leather in terms of sexual activity. It is one of the more noteworthy things we do. That would seem to be natural. The driving force created by our sex instinct applies to all that we do. We are, after we're fed, clothed, and housed, sexual creatures.

So, I'm not going to say that sex isn't a significant delineator of our lifestyle. It is, and I, for one, like it that way. For most people, leather activity begins and ends with sex. They have no desire for sadomasochism, domination, or role-playing outside of the bedroom, playroom, or dungeon.

Since the weekly column I write is about leather, topics such as whipping, or fisting, or water sports get most of my attention. After all, these things are the most interesting, the ones that most people want to know about, the ones that set our activities apart from the rest of human sexual activity.

If your definition of leather begins and ends in the bars and the bedroom, you're in good company. To apply the word "lifestyle" to leather is to move into areas of a subculture that are rare. For most, leather is a once-in-a-while foray into an experience simply for the sake of the fun.

When Your Master Comes For Dinner

Few of us are able to incorporate leather into our everyday routine. Still fewer of us are involved, or even want to be involved, in a full-time leather lifestyle. The press of day-to-day living is forever with us. The demands of employment, housekeeping, and sleep severely intrude on the joys of discipline, domination, and sex.

Lynn once complained that he didn't see much of his live-in slave Bobby. The slave rises early to go to the gym before his full day of work in an office. The master often has work-related meetings in the evening. Like most American couples, they get to see each other at dinner, between meetings, and while they're rushing from this duty to that one. It's no different for leather folk. If you don't think you have enough time for leather, you're just like the rest of us.

"I don't get to beat Bobby anywhere near enough," says Lynn, echoing,

in leather terms, the complaint that we all share: our lives are too full of other obligations. There isn't enough time in anyone's day for all that we'd like to do.

What makes looking for a full-time slave so difficult is that real or ideal master-slave relationships are so rare that you are almost certain never to have seen one. That means, the people you're looking at—even if they believe they know about master-slave relationships—have probably never seen a real one either. Oh, there may be a few couples here and there who have the luxury of exploring domination, submission, and control to the fullest, but for the vast majority of us, such an adventure is impossible. Most of what we do see is not very genuine or very developed—not necessarily bad, just not what some of us are looking for.

Most slave/applicants prefer it that way too. In every instance (can I be so emphatic?), both the master and the slave have the desire or the need to retain some kind of autonomy.

On the master's part, it is usual that he or she will not want to take over the slave's financial responsibilities. To put it bluntly, most masters want their slaves to be income-producing. In the rare instance where such is not the case, it's only the master's secure financial position and probable desire for the slave's full-time service that relieves the slave of the need to earn money outside the master's domain.

I know, too, that several masters are looking for slaves to use as employees and domestics. In these situations, one can hardly say that the slave is free from responsibility. He or she is now responsible for his master's service.

Slaves, on their part, consider other factors in the relationship as well. I recently talked to a slave/applicant who expressed the desire that his master (when he found him) would allow him to go to architectural school. Another slave/applicant wanted a master who would be affectionate, even loving, in the relationship. A third wanted to be sure that the master would allow him to compose classical musical, a fourth that he could pursue his career as an industrial engineer.

Even though my dual careers of writing and teaching have always left me a great deal of discretionary time, it has also required me to juggle my schedule between classes, writing deadlines, and relationships. I never saw my master nearly as often as I would have liked.

Financial considerations also restricted the intensity of our relationship. After all, who wants fiscal responsibility for a slave (me) with two children to put through college?

Like most people, then, Lynn and I had to find time to be together. This chapter is about that kind of opportunity.

One day, Lynn told me he'd be coming down on Sunday afternoon and would stay over in order to attend some meetings in Chicago. So, I made certain that I had done enough writing before his arrival so that I could give my full attention to my master's presence.

Sunday was spent grocery shopping, cleaning the condo, and anticipating my master's arrival. I planned the day to include shaving, bathing, dusting, washing the dishes and the floors, putting away books and papers, and cooking dinner. I expected Lynn to arrive at about six o'clock.

By three, I had finished the shopping, prepared a lasagna for baking, dusted, straightened up (so to speak) the house, emptied the dishwasher and cleaned the kitchen. It was then that I thought that "When Your Master Comes to Dinner" would be a good topic for my weekly column.

What the preparations made me realize was that *I was excited*. I wasn't sexually aroused. I was simply excited, glad to know that he would be here. My mind was also occupied with the rest of the things I had to accomplish: cleaning the bathroom, shaving, showering, mopping the floors.

There's never enough time for everything. When Lynn arrived earlier than I expected, nothing in the last paragraph had been done. I hung up his jacket and put my two coats away as well, hoping he wouldn't see the bathroom until I had time to clean it.

As we were catching up on the news of the week, I realized that I hadn't yet stripped as is expected. I did so forthwith. He sat on the couch and I knelt at his feet. He relayed the complaint about not seeing Bobby enough. "I've only gotten two blow jobs from him this week," he lamented.

I told him that I would be glad to give him five or six in the next 24 hours. He liked that idea, spread his legs, and said I could start now. So much for cleaning the bathroom. So much for leather not being a primarily sexual event!

Within the next half hour, my mouth coaxed my master's cock into shooting a large and blissful amount of jism which he followed with an hour's nap, and I completed my chores.

When I woke him from his nap, it was time for cocktails, dinner, a quick run to the video store and a night in front of the television. When the movie ended, it was time for a fuck, blow job number two, and bed.

It didn't take either of us very long to get to sleep. As I drifted away, I could only bask in the good feelings of being with a man I loved, one whose life had become inextricably woven into mine. Whatever else mastery and slavery has held for us, it has meant contentment.

That, of course, is what we want out of any relationship. To know the other is there, will be there, and to find ways to enjoy that presence. At the day's end, I knew that I had enjoyed not only the sucking and the fucking, but the shopping, the cooking, and the cleaning as well. As seldom as we admit it, those everyday chores are as much a part of living in leather as the kink.

When you find yourself disbelieving the possibilities of leather, remember that we're folks just like all the others. We've simply found the courage and the time to explore.

“LOVE?” you ask

Steven was my first long-term submissive. We began our relationship by just trying things out. He was interested in experiencing leather. I wanted to know what it was like to have a slave. The situation was made easier by the fact that we lived in the same apartment building, but not the same apartment.

For nearly a year and a half, he served me well, bringing me orange juice in the morning, doing the dishes at night, and being available for sexual play of any kind whenever I wanted it. It really was a great relationship.

To make a long story short, I entered into a relationship with a wonderful man named Bart, so I set Steven free and ended that relationship. Actually, it was only over for about eight weeks, because it became obvious to me that Steven was the man I loved. The monogamy with Bart was short-lived.

We were soon back in each other's lives and he made plans to move in with me. Shortly thereafter, we put away our leather toys, stored the whips and chains, and settled down to what became a very fulfilling, five year, non-leather relationship. For us, love and leather no longer mixed.

Steven and I eventually broke up, and it took no time at all for me to get back into my leather attire and put my SM lifestyle back into full swing.

In the years since then, I've learned a lot more about leather, about relationships, and about myself. I've had a few part-time slaves since then, lots of men who played with me once or twice, and have acquired both a lover and a live-in slave.

The question remains, though, as to whether a top can dominate and subjugate a man (or woman) whom he loves. Does love demand an egalitarian relationship? Can a sadist inflict pain on a lover, a friend, a life partner?

I have to admit to not having seen very many lover/master/slave relationships, though I can think of a few that do exist. In those cases, the partners have worked out various ways to practice SM while keeping their relationship viable and amorous. Often, when the partners are involved in leather, the leather play is either reserved for specific times and/or places in their relationship, or is only carried on with those outside of the partnership.

I can think of two lovers, for instance, men who have been together for more than fifteen years. Both of them are into spanking, but they never spank each other. Stan loves Tom, and Tom would enjoy a paddling from him, but he's never gotten it since Stan can't bring himself to hit his lover, though he disciplines others easily.

Relationships where one continually dominates and controls the other are quite rare. While it's probably obvious that no person could spend all his or her time in submission, it's also true that dominating a person takes effort and energy; hence, it's unlikely that any master would want to spend all his time in control of another.

But must love diminish the sadomasochism of leather, or cause dominance and submission to cease? I think not.

Steven and I ended the leather aspects of our relationship because we

weren't yet able to handle the full intensity that we were invoking in our lives. Indeed, the five years "away" from leather gave me a chance to integrate SM as a meaningful part of my life. I was able to think about it while not being involved in it. I was able to mature and then return to leather fully aware of what I was doing and why I was doing it.

When I submitted myself to Lynn, I wondered if love would enter into our being together. As a matter of fact, we both agreed that we didn't want love to ruin our SM.

Love wasn't the reason I first stripped and knelt before my master — it was my real desire to explore leather at its depth, to see what life on the submissive side could show me. I wanted to experience being on the receiving end of sadism. By doing so, I learned a lot about technique, about pain and transmuting it into pleasure, about service, and yes, about love.

For somewhere in the days of our being together, I found myself loving the man who dominated me, and I dare say, he found that he loved me as well.

Love changed our relationship, and probably changed it for the better. There were more tender moments, more intimate times, and some relaxation of roles. I admit to missing some of the intensity of the first few months, but there remained a great deal of sexual intensity. Both remembered why we were together: to explore, experiment, and find how closely two men can be bonded, united.

That is, of course, what love is all about. SM gives an added dimension to concepts such as service, devotion, and caring. Because we are leatherfolk, we can experience a wide range of emotions, of sensations, of feelings. Because we love each other, the experience becomes deeper, safer, more intimate.

As a leather man, I gave myself to my master for the joy of the experience, the surrender of self to another self. Love enhances that giving by doubling the reason to do so.

Lynn and I didn't begin our relationship with any expectations of falling in love. In fact, our lives together exhibited very little of what might be called romance. Friends smiled and strangers looked twice when I greeted my master by falling to the floor and kissing his shoes, but it showed more than an acceptance of him as my master.

It really had become a sign of affection, of devotion.

Not too long ago, I was at the international terminal at O'Hare Airport. A man who appeared to be the father of a Hindu family was departing. The men gave him polite hugs of good-bye, an older woman perhaps his wife or mother, gently bowed from a short distance. Two young teenage girls kissed his feet. I was awed by such a scene.

It was so different from the Italian-American culture in which I was raised. Each gesture was almost inconceivable within the context of Western culture. On the other hand, when I flashed to seeing myself at my master's feet, I understood the respect and love being displayed.

We are too often caught in our own worlds, our own perceptions and our

own prejudices. Why must a thing be only one way? Why do we see events as either/or, without acknowledging the possibility of either a third way or both ways?

If a gentle caress meets a need, it ought to be given. If a good paddling does the same thing, why is it seen as being different?

There is no one way to be a leather person, no one way to love. Instead, we ought to find the ways that reflect our true selves, fulfill our real needs, and allow us to give ourselves to others honestly and openly. Knowing ourselves and being clear as to our motives and desires is the first step to being able to love freely and deeply.

Leather gives us an opportunity to love without restriction, without preconceived ideas and predetermined methods. Can masters love their slaves? Of course. Can slaves love their masters? Certainly. After all is said and done, only love continues. Without love, none of the rest really matters.

More About Love

Last week, a reader of my weekly column asked about masters and slaves loving each other. I sent him a copy of the section above. He wrote back thanking me, but saying I was really too wishy-washy in my answer to be of any use.

I reminded him that relationships are defined by the two people in them and that, if a master and slave wanted to love each other, that was good enough for me.

Well, the paragraphs I sent to the reader are a bit old, having been written in February, 1994, so I thought it best to update the information a bit.

As you know, I generally write from my life experience. Then I had been a slave for a year and a half, had a lover for only a few months, and had not yet found a slave. Thank the gods that time changes things, at least when the change is for the better.

So, what do I think now? I think that relationships are still defined by the people in them, so, be who and how you want to be, with the proviso that you can find someone to let you be with them the way you want. Unfortunately, if you can't find someone with whom you can agree concerning your relationship, then you will be alone.

The problem we leather folk face with love is probably one of semantics. We jump from the premise that "I love you" to the one where "We are lovers" to the situation where lovers are "supposed to act" in a certain way. For better or worse, we are programmed from an early age that loving means monogamy, fidelity, honesty, and the missionary position in the bedroom. Here I exaggerate, but you get my point.

We see few, if any, role models for alternative, loving committed relationships. And the fiction that feeds our libido doesn't help either. So, I rely on my experience as I write the following.

Lynn and I were master and slave for five years. I loved him dearly and know that he loved me as well (and that is still the case). There was some amount of affection between us, but not much on a scale of one to ten. In the realm of sex, we kept our relationship simply one of sadism/masochism and dominance/submission. In terms of activity, we never French kissed, switched roles, or walked down the street hand in hand.

We wanted to explore a master/slave relationship, found it very satisfying, and saw no need to live differently. We loved each other and freely admitted it. On the other hand, we seldom, if ever, have acted like lovers. And that is fine with both of us.

Oh, there have been times when we've acted more lovingly, such as when Lynn was hospitalized with a broken ankle. I moved in with him and helped him domestically until he was literally back on his feet. It was the occasion of the accident, in fact, that brought home the strong feelings I have about how much I really do love him.

Now, with Michael, it's different. We're lovers. There's no room for master/slave stuff in our very egalitarian relationship. We love each other. There are spoken (and some written) commitments between us. In some ways, we act like lovers, talk about marriage and living together, and we flip a bit, at least when it comes to sex.

Though there's no room for master/slave stuff, there's lots of room for leather. In fact, we often play in Michael's well-equipped dungeon. Once we get into sex play, there's lots of BDSM. There's pain, kink, bondage. I look like a master, Michael acts like a slave. But it's play, not really pretend, since the whips and paddles hurt, but what we do to each other is *for* each other.

I am pleasing him, he me. Isn't that what love is all about?

It's strange, then, that being lovers can eliminate leather. We have this image that love is all kissy-face romance; that it's two, and only two, doing it one way, and only one way. That idea is preposterous if you ask me.

Now, it isn't preposterous that love makes mastery more difficult. Mastering takes dominance, a kind of selfishness, an ability to receive without worrying about giving. The slave becomes a "toy", a plaything. He, the slave, surrenders will and choice in order to choose to serve in an especially intense way.

My experience with Lynn demonstrates that love can exist between master and slave. On the other hand, telling your slave that you love him or her may not be the most appropriate verbalization of your mutual reality. Michael adds that it may not even be true. It's a matter of communication.

When we hear, "I love you," it's an easy slide into making inappropriate assumptions about what is meant. Our minds are conditioned to treat love a certain way. Very soon, we act like lovers and the "SM thing" is out the window, buried under a barrage of expectations.

For that reason, there are probably few masters and slaves who profess to be in love. If you question them, though, they probably do love each other,

in their own way. There's a hesitancy to say "I love you" for fear that it will destroy the nature of the relationship. It's tricky to explain.

If we're talking about real ownership, real dominance, real sadism, then there probably has to be some kind of aloofness between the partners. Becoming "lovers" may negate those qualities.

There might be distinctions as well. Once, I asked Patrick if he loved me. He answered in guarded terms. He loves being my slave, loves serving me, loves what I do to him, with him. He loves the way I master him.

A slave applicant recently asked Patrick if he was happy. "How could I answer," he queried, "except to say, 'yes'?"

Doesn't that bring us back to love, the desire to make each other happy?

Ah, love, such a many splendored thing. Do I love you? Let me count the ways. How do I love you? Let me count my whips.

The Dynamics of Power and Pain

The dictionary defines the word dynamics as “the study of the relationship between motion and the forces affecting motion.” It also describes it as the “psychological aspect or conduct of an interpersonal relationship.” In simpler terms, the dynamics are the forces, the reasons, and the inner needs that sustain our leather lifestyle.

After all, there is a “Why” to what we do. There are reasons that have fashioned us as leather folk.

Of course, that’s not to say that SM is purely reasonable. Though it has its logic, leather can also be an emotional response, or a physical one. Our reasons may not always be clear-cut and evident: they may, in fact, be subconscious, or we may not ever have bothered to ask ourselves, “Why am I doing this to him?”

On the other hand, to discount sadomasochism simply as mindless or, even worse, as a disease or dysfunction, is to miss the myriad meanings it holds for its participants. There are probably as many “reasons” for enjoying SM as there are people who practice it. Likewise, one can consider SM from a variety of viewpoints.

The forces of power and pain are two of the most noticeable aspects of SM. They are part and parcel of the dynamics of our sadomasochistic relationships. Their inclusion as primary vehicles in our play raises eyebrows, causes amazement, and generally brings upon us the criticism and disgust of the unknowing. But power and pain are central, along with sex and signals, to what we are about.

Face it: we use power and pain differently than most other people. We are frank and open about being dominant or submissive. We acknowledge ourselves as slaves and masters, tops and bottoms. Many of us go out of our way to find ways to inflict pain on others. Even more outstanding and outrageous, some of us seek pain, search for those who will inflict it on us, and are not only grateful for, but delighted by, the pain they give us.

Certainly, thankfully, we are different than the norm.

Power and pain are intrinsically united in the conduct of our SM. At the

root of what's going on in our dungeons, our playrooms, and our bedrooms is a transfer and a sharing of power. Achieving this power exchange is one of our goals, the reasons that we do what we do.

Pain is a vehicle for our power transfer. By inflicting pain, the top makes real the power he wields. By accepting pain, the submissive surrenders *his* power and receives power in return. For all of us, pain releases the physical and psychic energies that make SM so well worth our efforts.

I want to stay holistic. I want to maintain the basic unity between power and pain as I discuss them. Once I separate them, I lose sight of their intrinsic cohesion. After all, they go together like "horse and buggy" or ought I rather write like "horse and buggy whip?" We humans, though, think in categories, understand one concept at a time, and think we speak in single-meaning words, or at least try to. So, bear with me as I discuss power.

Fundamentally, those who aspire to be masters and mistresses must be comfortable with power. That means they need the ability to acquire it, use it, enjoy it, live with its consequences, overcome the negative connotations inherent in being powerful, and elude the corruption it may bring and the conceit it is liable to engender. To do so, to be comfortable as powerful men and women, can be difficult. The Judeo-Christian ethic that permeates our culture inculcates in us a great deal of negativity about power. We are taught that the meek shall inherit the earth, that modesty and humility are virtues, and to turn the other cheek.

Those are not ideas that create dommes.

From the earliest of our years, we are made to conform to the status quo, taught to obey rules made by others, the standards set by society, the culture and mores that make us all submissives. In other words, we learn to submit and are punished if we don't. The powers that raised us want a world of bottoms.

At the same time, our education fills us with ambivalence, for it reinforces in us the drive to compete, to win, to conquer, to gain fame and fortune by succeeding, while trying to ensure that we are good, "law-abiding" citizens, i.e., that we do what we are told.

We have been socialized from birth to eschew power. Society, of course, has mixed feelings in that regard: we honor the powerful wealthy, we elect politicians to power, we obey the power of our religious leaders. At the same time, most people accept their own powerlessness.

A master needs to be comfortable with what it means to control another. The best mistresses and masters are responsible, direct, and decisive. They are able to accept service, attention, the "gift of self" that a slave desires to bestow on his or her owner.

Not every leather relationship, and certainly not every SM scene, involves pain. We do lots of kinky but painless things to each other. More often than not, though, pain enters the play and the relationship at one time or another. But it isn't pain for the sake of pain. The pain inflicted in SM brings

catharsis, bonding, pleasure, self-affirmation and the experience of alternate states. Those, I am sure, are reasons enough. Additionally, pain can also have the effect of causing a sense of transition, as in the coming of age rituals of many primitive cultures.

It is pain for the pleasure, the dominance, the learning, and the power of it. The primary dynamic that occurs is bonding. Two people, and occasionally more, are getting together by getting it on.

The analogy is very simple and very clear. With our bodies, our minds, and our toys we make ourselves into magnets: attracting and clinging to our complement. We enter into relationships of polarity. Like the magnetic forces of North and South, energy flows from one to the other.

One takes, the other gives. That sentence is broad in its implications. The top takes control, takes power, both of which the bottom gives. The dynamic here is magnet-like because of the pull towards each other that occurs. Like a magnet, the flow is in both directions. Yes, the bottom, and even more so, the slave, gives his power to the top, but as he or she surrenders to the will of the master, he is drawn into the master's power. As the two become one, power—the master's power—is returned to the slave.

Pain is the opener and the scaler to the exchange. Inflicting pain arouses the master. I know that nothing gets my cock harder than to slap a bottom with a riding crop or paddle. (Joanne adds: "You hard, me wet!") The more intense the pain inflicted, the more pleasure I derive from the act. The act itself fills me with a sense of power. The arousal makes that power real as it affects my body, my mind, my psyche. I am energized and the sense of power grows within me.

Pain, of course, effects the slave as well. His or her reactions are varied and fall into several categories. First, the pain causes a hormonal reaction. Endorphins are released, the pain alleviated, and euphoria occurs. That bliss contains a sense of power.

There are other dynamics at work. The ability to take the pain, to endure the beating, to surpass one's limits of endurance fills the bottom with affirming, energizing power. It's this feeling that makes pain pleasurable for me. My childhood and adolescence were filled with self-doubt about my masculinity. "Taking it like a man" empowers me as the man I really am. The pain proves my strength, my manliness. It fills me with a sense of power.

Sometimes, and more often than we might suspect, SM pain is cathartic. My forty-seventh birthday fell on the same day as World Wide AIDS Awareness Day. It, therefore, held mixed feelings: the pleasure at the thought of surviving to the age of 47, sadness in remembering the friends I've lost to AIDS, and the suffering it brings to those who still live with it. To celebrate the day, my master invited me to play with him at his home. After dinner, he tied me spread eagle to the cross in his basement and put 47 clothespins on my body. They went on easily and were hardly felt until he took them off.

Their effect, though, as he slowly removed them one by one, was to move something inside me, to break up a log jam of emotion, of sadness, of loss. As

they came off, I cried for my friends who had died, for the ones I love who are infected with HIV.

I let the pain rush through me, cleanse me, purge me, empty me. I let the kinks, the facades, the hurts flow and get swept away by the pain. I was empty when he was done and in that "emptiness" I was easily filled with his warmth, his love, the goodness of the universe. It was a much needed catharsis and one that restored balance to my emotional life. Such are the dynamics of SM.

At other times, the bottom endures the pain not for himself but for his master. He undergoes it in order to give pleasure. In many ways, giving pleasure is the essence of the slave mindset, the goal that brings them real satisfaction. Slaves enjoy the pleasure they give their masters and that reward is enough to offset the pain they are enduring. The dynamic isn't single either. There's no reason why more than one sensation might not be felt at the same time.

The pain can be cathartic, received for the top's pleasure, and still contain its own pleasure as well. The pleasurable component of pain is the most mysterious. I've seen boys beaten black and blue writhe in pain. As they accept it, surrender to it, an amazing calm enters them. In the midst of punishment, they give themselves to the will of their tops. It is then that the euphoria of pain transmutes them. They feel bonded to their master in a special way. What separates master and slave dissolves. The frontiers of their individual and personal lives blend for the moment. Without being able to explain, even articulate it fully, I can only say that they become one.

This strange and wonderful dynamic is a prime reason why we do what we do. Let me explain.

I'm not a Marxist at all, but I think he had good points about alienation. Our separateness and our loneliness weigh on each of us unbearably. We are created as individuals. And God knows, there are none more individualistic than we leather folk. Yet, we strive to unite ourselves in some way or other with the Other. Religion talks about union with God. Families talk of unity of blood; politicians of common bonds among citizens or neighbors. We seek friends, lovers, companions, or wealth, status, or acclaim, fame, and notoriety, all to become *one*.

Master and slave, top and bottom, are on the same quest. We continue on that quest for the simple reason that every once in a while, really not often enough, but often enough to keep us going, the power and the pain that we share unites us in that mystery of coming together.

I see my slave take the pain I give and use it to drift into the universe. He dissolves, fades, floats without the boundaries of time, place, and self. He is one, calm and at peace. He has entered an altered state.

As sadist, I experience that unity only vicariously. I see it in his face. I sense it in some inner self that is aware without sensation, aware because what is, is.

In a different way, the power and the infliction of pain expand my being,

pull my slave into me. This man becomes my property and my toy. I not only claim him as mine but make him mine and draw him into me. I open my heart to him and he enters. He opens his heart and I claim it, own it, have it. For the moment, we are one. Mysteriously, we become united. We rest in that being. The moment passes and we return to our self-hood, changed because, for one brief moment, we were together.

That is the secret world of SM. Beyond the leather, the roles, the fetish, is the sweet joy, the dynamic at work.

On more than one occasion, I've had experiences that approach the topic of the section below: SM Travel. I can't say that I've ever actually had the mystical trips that I'm going to discuss, but I have come close enough to know that there is something to the "spiritual" side of leather.

More often, I have been present as my partner has obviously experienced a powerful shift in his awareness. Since I'm neither a physician nor a psychologist, I won't comment on the "reality" of the experience. Instead, and what is more important, let me write about entering that state.

I spent the better part of my time in college studying Philosophy. It was enough of an education to prove to me that all human knowledge is gained through our senses—however many of them there are—and that our senses act as filters, making absolute certainty impossible. You know, it's the old question as to whether we are awake or not. Is life a dream? Do we actually inhabit a "more" real world when we sleep? Is the glass half full or half empty?

There's not much sense to that line of questioning. I've come to the conclusion that pragmatism is the best approach. If it works, OK, it works. I may not be able to explain what happens, but I know that something does happen.

SM Travel

Putting that "something" into words isn't easy, which is why it's called an "altered state," a situation where the usual sensory and emotional situation appears different. The difference may be induced by any number of catalysts: sex, drugs, sleeplessness, meditation, hypnosis, beauty, art, cinema, affection, pain, pleasure, and of course, SM.

The first time it happened was with my then-slave Steven, long before I moved to Chicago. Scenes between us came easily and without a lot of discussion. We became more and more aware of what SM meant to us and what a powerful vehicle it could be.

The best indication of what could happen first took place one night in my bathroom. We had been playing for an hour or so, and I was in a real "take over his body" mood. I had been doing a lot of ass-playing with him and, in fact, had given him an enema. He was sitting on the stool as I fondled his genitals. It was a heavy duty scene that only two very intimate friends could be ex-

pected to share.

The scene quietly flowed into a high level of intensity. Each of us was "buzzing" with delightful sensations. In that moment, we both had an indescribable experience. Something passed between us, engulfed us, lifted us to some celestial plane. It was what I have come to call a "white light" experience. It was pleasant and felt very safe and warm. There was no fear or danger associated with it, but it was mysterious, other-worldly.

When it passed, I looked Steven in the eyes and asked, "Did you feel what I just felt?" Indeed, he had. I gently ended the scene. We both cleaned up and went to bed, not untouched by the power that had passed between us. The power of that moment loses a lot in writing about it.

Similar events happened with my lover Michael when he was bound spread-eagle on a cross, with my friends Richard and Lee in intense (but separate) bondage scenes, and with a guy I'll call Jim, whom I beat with a riding crop until he had an "out of body" experience.

In each case, I was an observer as well as participant. My actions of dominance, of restraint, and of discipline seem to have been responsible for inducing the experience, though it's obvious that my partners participated actively as well. When the scenes were over, each had an story to tell.

Richard and Lee, according to their own telling, had some kind of past life visions. Lee, for instance, recounted, as the scene was in progress, his viewing of the two of us as American Indians in some past lifetime. He described what was going on between us, as if he were watching a movie and telling me about it at the same time.

With Michael, I ended the scene prematurely. While firmly bound to a St. Andrew's Cross, he was whipped past pain into some kind of ecstatic state. Frankly, all I saw was that he swooned. I interpreted his deep relaxation as trouble. So, I quickly untied him and lowered him to the floor. His reaction was to ask "Why did you stop?" On his part, nothing was wrong. In fact, everything was wonderful.

Another amazing trip seems to have been the one that Jim took. He and I were playing in my dungeon. Both of us were naked, as I remember. I was kneeling, legs slightly spread apart, on a mattress. Jim was lying prone in front of me, bound in that position. I began by gently beating him on the back with my favorite crop. Over a period of time, as his back turned an intense shade of red, I increased the severity of the beating.

I had seen Jim play before and knew him to be an experienced masochist. If ever there was the right moment to bring someone through a "window" into another reality, this was it. For a time, Jim struggled with the lashes, yelling quietly, squirming on the mattress to the extent that the ropes allowed, and bucking up and down, trying to avoid the pain. I refused to let his cries or his movements distract me. Eventually, he became silent. His breathing moved into an easy, sleep-like rhythm. His body relaxed profoundly.

I kept up my insistent whipping. There was a sense that he was handling

everything very well. Eventually, I stopped and let him lay there until he was ready to “come back.” When he did, he recounted how he had seen himself lying on the mattress from the vantage point of the ceiling. He had felt himself drifting above us, disconnected from the pain and the moment, aware of the activity but somehow separate from it.

That is why I call myself an explorer. Adventures like these beckon me to leather. But they don’t happen regularly. In fact, they happen only rarely, when the factors of experience, deep trust, patience, and serendipity somehow come together to make it work. Oh, most scenes are fun, but the best scenes have this strange appeal to them.

I’d like to give a simple blueprint for attaining such altered states, but I can’t. Though there are a few baseline requirements, they are not easily duplicated. It seems you can’t make them happen at will.

Michael and I, for instance, have great sex, but the event on that cross has never been duplicated. We’ve come close, but never has it been like that.

The attitudes of the partners, the ambiance of the place and time (never in a rush), all seem to promote or hinder the attainment of that mysterious “going through the window”. Physical properties, such as fatigue, stress, doubt, fear, and anger seem to detract. Patience, affection, and extremes of pain and pleasure seem to enhance it. Mutual trust is certainly a prerequisite.

Can these experiences be repeated? Possibly, but I doubt it. Certainly no two trips are ever exactly the same. There is some fluidity in an altered state that suggests that the “veil” is parted only seldom, as if some higher force says, “Here’s your glimpse, now go back to your reality.”

It’s indeed a cruel voice that whispers such a sad sentence, but what else can we do but live where we live, while searching for the fulfillment that gives reason to our incarnation?

Though it introduces elements of religion and drug-use, let me quote my friend Larry as he describes his out of body experience. The words in square brackets are mine:

“As you will recall, I was, and still am, very much into astral travel. The Universe is a virtual play ground. [So, why can’t I find it on the Internet?] Phil [his lover at the time] was also very spiritual. We were and still are Wiccan and put a lot of faith into the powers of various aspects of the Universe. Maybe this preface will make my experience somewhat suspect. That’s for you to decide.

“Perhaps it is important to know that I am versatile. I can go either top or bottom. I was top most of my life until I met Phil, who preferred me to be bottom. I had no problem with that, but never really lost my preference to be top. Then, again, maybe none of that is important.

“Anyway, the experience: Phil was intent on getting into an intense pain scene with me. I knew he wanted to torture me, and I was in the frame of mind to let it happen. This night we did our ritual, which was always done naked, during the dark of the Moon. During it, he flogged my naked body with his

scourge. At one time, I was on my knees, and, as I stared into a cauldron set on the floor in front of me, he flogged me. I found it enjoyable as usual, but suddenly realized that I was beginning to go into a different space, an astral space.

"I felt myself leaving the temple [their room for prayer and meditation] and entering into an astral temple. But I still felt connected to our temple and to Phil. It was like sticking your head through the veil, but not your whole body. What I saw was beautiful, yet, I still felt the thongs of the scourge on my butt and my back. It was an awesome experience.

"After our ritual, Phil wanted to go further. He prepared outside the temple, and I contemplated my body in the temple. When he was ready, he asked me to come to the bedroom and lay on the floor in my nakedness. He proceeded to flog my butt and back with his scourge, which was very enjoyable. Then he asked me to sniff poppers, which I did.

"His flogging became more intense and more enjoyable at the same time. We did that several times until the flogging was very intense, yet, the sexual enjoyment was still there.

"Then Phil asked me to get up on the bed with my legs dangling over the edge and my genitals completely exposed. I did so. I was willing to let happen whatever was going to happen. He showed me the needles and said he was going to build a ladder. I said, 'Okay.'

"Phil pushed a needle through the skin [but not the shaft] on top of my penis, near my groin, and I inhaled some more poppers. The pain was there but not excruciating. Phil asked how I was doing, and I said fine. Then he pushed another needle through the skin just in front of the first needle. Again Phil asked how I was doing, and I said fine. And so it went with four needles, building a ladder of needles up from the base of my cock. I knew he had three or four more needles to go before he reached the head of my cock.

"Suddenly, I heard/felt a 'click' in my brain, and I found myself soaring into the most beautiful space I had ever been in. The bedroom was gone. Phil was gone. I was in a huge golden but transparent bubble. The music I heard and the scenes and colors I saw were pure and wonderful. I was naked. I was elated beyond belief.

"Although I vaguely felt the next needle go into my penis, there was no pain. At that moment, a beautiful young androgynous man appeared. Without saying anything, I knew he was going to tend my wounds, which he did. The pain went away as he soothed my penis with his hands. There's no doubt that I was in a transparent bubble of some sort, but the man came and went through the walls of the bubble as necessary.

"I had never felt more relaxed and more cared for in my life. I was truly happy. I felt wonderfully erotic at the same time. I can't really explain it, but it was certainly a combination of the two — happy and erotic."

I'm conservative enough to warn you not to attempt what Larry and Phil accomplished. They are both experienced leathermen. The scene that Larry narrates is filled with techniques polished by years of experience. Using pop-

pers (or any drugs) can be unwise. Flogging is not an experience to be given (or taken) lightly. Certainly, the use of needles ought to be attempted only under the watchful eye of, or by, someone who knows how to handle them.

Beyond those warnings, Phil and Larry had a long-term, committed relationship that insured trust between them. If Larry's experience seems to be extraordinary, it is because their relationship is unique.

In order to understand, at least partly, what goes on during such an other-worldly event, we need to approach the experience from another viewpoint. Several Eastern religions have better ways of explaining the phenomena.

Buddhism, especially, teaches extensively about "chakras", energy centers within and around the human body that control and affect us. They list seven such major chakras and many more less significant: the sexual center, the spleen, the heart, the throat, the forehead (more usually called the third eye), and the crown. The seventh chakra is either lower (called the root) or higher (called the transpersonal point). Some consider both and say there are eight major energy centers.

It is the opening of these centers of energy, and the control of their flow that seems to enhance the various mystical experiences I am discussing. Needless to say, this isn't the place to go into great detail about Eastern philosophy and religion. Besides, I'm not sure I really understand enough of it to give you a good explanation. At this point, I can only suggest that you do some reading and researching.

Please remember that there's only so much one can say in a single book. Some topics take a lifetime. Other topics just can't be put into words. All topics are just a small slice of what really goes on.

For instance, having read this book, one might think that all leather folk are either masters or slaves, or want to be. In truth, master and slave types are few and very far between. Likewise, the topic of this section—altered states and energy—deals in part with an experience that is rare: the awakening of kundalini energy.

Here's a more recent experience:

Thursday night after class is a time when I can relax and enjoy the finer pleasures of life without anxiety or preparation for the next day. It's also the night that part-time slave Chris comes over, setting the scene for some really hot sex. One night he told me that his lover, who knows and approves of our relationship, would be out of town on business and that his work load the next day was light enough that he could get through it with a less-than-usual amount of sleep. Thus the evening was set for some special play.

When I arrived home at 9:15, my two boys were sitting naked on the living room floor. God only knows what two slaves talk about when their master is away, so I won't try to fill in that part of the scenario.

They both greeted me with the obligatory kissing of my shoes. I sat on the couch, instructed Patrick to get me a beer and to make some popcorn. The three of us settled into comfortable (at least for me) positions and engaged in

small talk. There was no need to rush. We chatted amicably, talked about our previous Thursday night together, and asked and answered questions about work, our relationship, the nature of punishment, and feelings that we had about our past times together.

The case of the evening was quite indicative of what was to come. Those special "highs," after all, are never accidental. They demand time, familiarity, relaxation, trust, and some elusive circumstances that I don't think I'll ever be able to put on paper.

Early on, Chris mentioned that he and his lover were going to a "socks and jocks" party. The implications were, of course, that he would appreciate my not marking his body too badly. Poor Chris still suffers from the closet syndrome. Oh well, this too shall pass.

In due time, I told my slaves to follow me into the bedroom where I propped myself against two pillows and the head board. I motioned them to kneel beside me, knees apart, backs upright. I began our play with lots of clothes pins to their genitals, then had them kiss while I played with the wooden pinchers. The mixture of pleasure and pain is a sure formula for success in SM.

Who says that two cocks aren't better than one? Counting my own raging hard on, I had three of them to entertain me. Being a master is such hard work, but someone has to do it!

If I continue to describe the evening in great detail, this book will be too big to carry, so let me cut it short by adding that we went from clothes pins to whipping to paddling to cock sucking and fucking to a rather wonderful orgasm on my part. Then I lay back and sent Patrick and Chris upstairs with orders for Chris to milk Patrick's jism into a condom and bring it to me.

When that was accomplished, Patrick was to go to sleep for the night (someone has to work in the morning) and Chris was to return to my bedside.

I relaxed in the glow, which means that I lay there feeling good, warm and relaxed, in a state somewhere between meditation and sleep. I enjoy going there, wherever "there" is. Altered states always make it hard to get a definition about "there."

I probably dozed a bit too, while waiting for my part-time property to return. When he did, I was grateful that his lover is able to share. I resumed playing with this handsome, well-built toy. I honestly can't tell you what happened next, except that we gradually built up to a point of heightened arousal once again.

Attitude certainly had something to do with what was going on. Chris has consistently desired and explored slavery, even if only within certain well-defined limits. Understandably, and wisely, he doesn't want being a slave to interfere with being a lover (of more than ten years), nor with a successful career and very active social life. In reality, he is new to all this stuff, though he has been fantasizing about it for years. Experience is clarifying and refining his desires. It's also improving his relationship at home.

So, during round two, I began to talk about his slavery and his need to serve. I encouraged him, ordered him, reasoned with him to let go, to open himself to real submission. I wanted him to spread his ass cheeks wide and beg to get fucked. I told him to focus on my prick and make it the center of his life. I suggested he take more pain and transform it into pleasure directed at me, his owner, master, and lord-for-the-night.

Heavy stuff, to be sure. I'm laughing as I write this. It really is a lot of fun. No wonder, though, so many people think I'm too intense.

Eventually, I was again whipping Chris' back. I used a long crop this time, one that will leave nice red marks, hopefully ones that will be noticeable at the socks and jocks party. "When they ask you about those marks, tell them that you're in training with Jack Rinella," I tell him. Some limits, after all, are meant to be respected. Other limits are meant to be violated. When I say it's important to know which are which, I'm VERY serious.

"Yes, Sir," says the part-time slave, crossing another threshold, opening himself to deeper self-awareness, increased intimacy, greater pleasure, and, what we don't yet know, an incredible, indescribable event in the next half hour or so.

So it happens that I'm sitting on his face. I respect Chris' request that he not rim me, but that doesn't stop either of us from enjoying oral-ass excitement. While he licks and kisses safe and clean places in my crotch, I tweak his tits and use my crop on his nuts. Here we have a perfect duality: my genitals for pleasure, his for pain. Between the two of us, there is a unity of opposites. I begin to imagine energy flowing through us. We are a complete circuit as energy streams between us. I visualize the flow from the tip of my crop to his cock, into his body, up his torso, out his throat into my lowest chakra, or energy center, up through me, mysteriously down my arm into the crop and back into his genitals.

It's not as easily defined as all that. I am talking about sensations that move in gentle, but powerful flows. Maybe it's out the top of my head into the crop. Perhaps the crop feels nothing. Could the crop be kinesthetically connected to my penis?

I put the crop aside (or at least I think I did), and lean over my property. I put my mouth near his cock head and squeeze his nuts. It is a classic 69 position.

Now I know the electrical charges that pulse through our bodies are complete. My prostate gland has forgotten that it shot already once tonight. Orgasm number two is building.

I sit up, stroking myself and emptying my energy into my slave. I take what is mine and in the same moment suck his energy into my body. It is the union of opposites, some strange *kinetic* fusion of two bodies into one for the moment. I shoot a large load of cum. I am master. I am lord. I approach a window into another reality, getting a fleeting glimpse, knowing there is more, not knowing how to fly through it.

Chris shakes uncontrollably underneath me, bucking wildly. He appears to be having an orgasm, but his dick is soft, no fluids emerge.

I tell him, silently in the language of the psyche, to keep his life, to hold on to it. I return his energy to him. I will own him, but never destroy him. I will take him and always return him safely to himself. Yes, I have some limits too. Neither of us is ready to let ecstasy end life. I tell our souls to bring us into balance: physically, spiritually, emotionally, intellectually. I ask for wholeness, for justice, for peace.

I am where I seek to be, glowing, warm, spent. Now what do I do? Where is the guide that will show me the path? This power is too good to be wasted, to be ignored, to be spent without profit. Once again, I find myself drifting into bliss and I want to know why. I use the moment for the only purpose that makes sense. I let the universe know that I seek wisdom. I ask for knowledge as well, but beseech whoever is listening, that wisdom be mine. Wisdom, after all, is what matters.

I roll off Chris onto the bed. There is nothing left but to wipe up and fall asleep, to let my body return to a place of balance, stasis, peace.

The next day, Chris sends me e-mail mentioning his "Kundalini experience." Whatever I had felt, he had felt something too. Amid the shaking and quaking, he'd had a phenomenal trip, accompanied by a flood of energy through his body.

There are more questions than answers in the experience, but then we are, after all, here to learn. Chris and I fall asleep. In the morning, he is gone, having left a thank you note on the kitchen counter. I wonder what the boys at the party will think. Will the marks be gone? That night's effects, I know, will transform us both.

Where do I go from here? The attaining of an altered state, as little discussed as it is, is really the basic rationale for SM. In many ways, it is the most "closeted" part of leather, the topic that is seldom discussed except in the most intimate of circles.

I can hardly do the phenomenon justice in this book. I can only encourage you to explore, to share, and to learn. If you can do that, leather will be better off for it. I'd appreciate your feedback. See you on the other side.

The Best Teacher

More often than not, the content of my weekly column (much of which formed the basis for this book) is prompted by letters and e-mail from those who are outside of the leather "scene" wanting to get in. Invariably, I reply that they should start by reading a few good books on the subject of SM, and I send them the list you can find in the appendix. Then, almost like clockwork, they tell me that they've already read them. "What should I do now?" they ask.

Once again, I am forced to say "Get experience."

My writing on leather has gained me a "national reputation". I think that such thoughts about me are rather ridiculous, though I do love the attention. After all, I'm just being myself as much as possible. To me, there is nothing really special about that.

I write those words because I know how I became the man I am: I went out and did what was necessary to get experience. You've read a lot about how that happened in this book. Let me fill you in on some of the parts that are missing.

My first repeated bondage scene was with myself. Late at night, after my wife and children were sound asleep, I would pull out a piece of old rope, tie my feet together and then tie one of the ropes to my testicles. Self bondage. Experimental, tentative, and cautious, but it gave me experience.

I went to a craft store and bought a package of rings used for fancy shower curtains. That's how I got my first cock ring. Many other of my early toys were acquired the same way. I just went out exploring in very safe places, using my imagination to create the "toy" I wanted next.

Buying clothespins was no big deal. After all, there's nothing kinky about that, until you put them on your tits and your cock. See, the first man I ever dominated was myself. It's safe, sane, easy, and gives you experience.

Doing as I did will give you experience and that's a good start. Experience is the best teacher.

With that modicum of "leather" play under your belt, continue to expand your experiences. That doesn't mean a "whole hog" plunge into the darkest (or brightest) depths of the leather world. It means you find a leather bar, an adult bookstore, or leather shop of some kind and ask questions. Buy a magazine or two, especially one with local listings, and search out appropriate ads. Inquire of local and national clubs. Attend public meetings. Meet as many people as possible. Let them know you're new to the scene. Chances are very good that they'll help you get the experience you need. It doesn't mean that everyone you meet will give you the experience you seek or even that everyone will be really friendly. It means that, if you look enough, you'll find that for which you're looking.

Please rid yourself of the idea that newcomers are unwelcome. Yes, those black hides may look threatening, but the human flesh underneath them is as warm and friendly as yours. A novice once told me he was afraid to go into a leather bar because he didn't want to disturb the "real leather men" in there. Sorry, guy, but that's a crock of shit. The people in those bars, as anywhere else, are as diverse as can be. It's closer to the truth that they'll gladly answer your questions, allay your fears, explain strange terms, introduce you to others, and help you find what you seek.

Not only do most leather folk want to help others become leather folk, most of us enjoy doing so. We also remember what it was like the first time we ventured into this mysterious subculture. Like you, we were apprehensive, confused, curious, and definitely propelled by an "abnormal" libido. The idea that "I'm the only one" is as old as can be. Guess what? You're not the only one, never were, and never will be. You're unique, that's true, but the humanity you experience is shared by countless billions around the world.

Even the kinky, secret, innermost passions that swell your prick or dampen your cunt are shared by others. I know I can be called an optimist, but I am convinced that every person, no matter what their desire, has a partner waiting for them somewhere. How to find him or her? Get experience.

Experience is "the active participation in events or activities, leading to the accumulation of knowledge or skill." Reading is certainly one form of experience, but it's only the beginning of the process.

So, you want to be a slave? So, you want to be a master? Get experience. No amount of thinking, reading, or talking will make you what you want to be. You must go out and get experience.

Your Turn

Since you've read this book this far, we can assume that you're interested in some kind of dominant/submissive relationship and that you have some idea of making changes in your sexual and/or social life. The only way that you'll be different after reading this is by changing. So, my friend, if you want things to be different, you must be willing to change.

It's all too frequent that some searching slave wannabe tells me that there are no masters where he lives. Frankly, I suppose it's just as easy to say that there aren't any slaves either. I think that the person who says that hasn't made an accurate analysis, or has been unwilling to make changes towards achieving his goal.

It's not only people on the ends of the spectrum who think like this. A good deal of the correspondence I receive is from lonely people who can "never" meet the partner of their dreams. More than once, I've thought I should start a dating service. My mail is full of "Dear Jack: I go to the bars and no one talks to me."

If you keep doing what you've done, you'll keep getting what you've got.

You are welcome to stay just the way you are and to live just the way you're living. No one has to change, at least in the short run. All you leather folk, though, who dream of a gorgeous top, an exciting scene, or a permanent friendship, are going to have to find some way to make the dream come true, unless you'd rather dream it than live it.

In the long run, we all change anyway. Getting grayer, or fatter, or richer, or smarter, or older, or dumber all seem to be reasonable possibilities. So, why not change towards your *ideals*?

Let me quote from a recent letter: "I have been extremely interested in SM, bondage, and leather for nearly 20 years. During this time, except for a few occasions, there has been no actual scene involvement on my part. I am looking for an opportunity to really get physically involved after all these years of reading about it, watching videos, and purchasing boxes of leather and toys. I have done all of this, and the bottom line is that I do not know a single person with whom I can go any further... without getting physically involved."

The gentleman then describes frustrating ventures to local clubs and seminars, where the best he has ever done is to watch. What's a person to do?

The casual observer would say that this man has tried to get into leather. He, it seems, would say that leather has somehow failed him. I will say that good analysis is necessary and that he has failed to change. There are three steps: analyze the situation, make a plan to change it, then put that plan into effect. He's come very close, but now all he has to do is *do it*.

Time and time again, while struggling to get by in Fort Wayne, Indiana, I asked myself what I was doing wrong. After years of such thinking, an honest analysis brought me to a conclusion. It wasn't *me* that had to change, at least as far as things like technique, looks, or emotions. I had to change by changing where I was living.

I was never going to be successful in computer sales in Northeast Indiana since the market there just wasn't buying what I was selling. I had to change my location. Now, I couldn't do that in one day, one week, or even one month, but I could develop a plan and set it into motion.

I had a really fine conversation with a slave-applicant last night. I am concerned about his weight, though we've never met. You see, our conversations indicate some real possibilities, but an extra number of pounds might make our futures incompatible. So, I asked him, "What is your waist?" and "What do you think it should be?" Notice; I did not give him direction as to what he should weigh, nor did I even say that an extra number of pounds posed some difficulty between us.

After he answered my questions, he grew silent. I had hit upon something about himself with which he was dissatisfied. If he wanted to reach his goal of being owned, perhaps he would have to make some changes in himself. I hadn't said it was a problem for me. I had only given him the opportunity to analyze a situation. His analysis showed an area for possible improvement.

It's one thing to sit down and make a list of resolutions. Face it; chances are, those resolutions won't last very long. It's another thing to do some serious self-analysis in advance so that the list we eventually construct is meaningful. It's not just a matter of change, but of effective change, change that we can accomplish, that leads us *toward* our goals.

The analysis required to begin taking “your turn” means that you have to be honest about what holds you back, what projects a negative image, what leads you to self-defeating actions. For instance, I know another man who worries about his weight and so starves himself. He’ll go all day without food and then snack at night. His analysis of why he is fat, “because I eat too much,” is erroneous. Any good dietician would tell him that eating regular, well-balanced meals would help him shed pounds and keep them off, when combined with regular exercise. His misguided self-starving plan makes his body hoard every calorie because it knows it’s going to be hungry later.

So, a proper analysis leads directly to a plan of action.

The third step is both the easiest and the hardest: just do it. Set aside your doubt, anxiety, and irrational fears, and *do it*. Do it, but be ready to analyze and change as might be necessary.

I didn’t move to Chicago on the same day that I decided to move. Instead, my plan called for writing a resume, searching for a job, going to interviews, liquidating many of my possessions, finding a place to live in Chicago, selling my home, etc. The plan had small goals that could be accomplished in steps, leading to my objective. There was nothing “whole hog” about it.

What was necessary was to do it, a step at a time, but to do it. Stop only reading about it, stop merely talking about it, stop thinking about it, and do it. After all, it’s your turn.

Book List

Non-Fiction

The Master's Manual: A Handbook of Erotic Dominance by Jack Rinella, Daedalus Publishing, ISBN 1-881943-03-8, \$14.95. A complete guide to becoming an experienced leather top. Good insights for bottoms as well.

Learning The Ropes by Race Bannon, Daedalus Publishing, ISBN 1-881943-07-0, \$12.95. One of the best beginners' books you'll find.

Ties That Bind by Guy Baldwin, Daedalus Publishing, ISBN 1-881943-09-7, \$14.95. A study of leather from a practicing psychologist who's an experienced leather man as well.

Leathersex by Joseph Bean, Daedalus Publishing, ISBN 1-881943-05-4 \$14.95. Everything you wanted to know from a man who knows what leather is all about.

Beneath The Skins by Ivo Dominguez, Daedalus Publishing, ISBN 1-881943-0602, \$12.95. A more philosophical inquiry for those who want to dig deeper.

Leatherman's Handbook II by Larry Townsend, Carlyle Communications, ISBN 0-503-09999-6, \$5.95. A revised version of the book that brought leather out of the closet.

Sensuous Magic: A Guide for Adventurous Couples by Patrick Califia, Cleis Press, ISBN 1-57344-130-9, \$14.95, Good ideas, good stuff.

Leatherfolk edited by Mark Thompson, Alyson Press, ISBN 1-55583-186-9. Great ideas from all sides about what we're really into.

Fiction

Mr. Benson by John Preston, Bad Boy Press, ISBN 1-56333-041-5, \$4.95. The one book to read if you're just curious.

Application For Training & the Opportunity To Serve a Master

Fill in the following to the best of your honest ability, using additional paper if necessary.

Full Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Age _____ Education level _____

Phone number _____

Have a lover? _____ How long? _____

Occupation _____ How Long? _____

Height _____ Weight _____

Waist _____

Hair: Color _____ Natural Amount _____

Are you into being shaved? _____ Elaborate _____

Inside that ass of yours:

What size dildos do you own? _____

Do you fuck yourself at home? _____

Tell me about it _____

Solos and three-ways:

Most scenes work best between a master and his slave, since, in that way, each can get the attention he needs without distraction. Longer scenes though may include another bottom, an observer, or another top. Recognizing that I will retain control, does this turn you on or off? As always, elaborate.

Discipline: Whipping, paddling, spanking. I'll not break skin, or permanently harm you. I'll try not to exceed your limits, though as usual, I will push them. Now, tell me what they are:

And speaking about asses: What about Enemas: Do you clean yourself out before you get to a scene?

Do you like to be given enemas? _____
Any kind of special enema turn-ons? _____

Tell me your limits, experience, and fantasy with piss _____

Lots of people have hidden fantasies about taking a fist. Are you one of them? _____

Have you ever been fisted? _____

Do you want to be fisted? _____

Any comments? _____

Bondage: What does it mean to you? What have you experienced? For how long?

There are several areas of the body where control, ownership, and possession take on a special meaning: the tits, the genitals, the ass, and the mouth.

I don't mark or hurt my slaves, but I do cause them pain.

Expect serious tit work: clothespins, clamps, twine, rawhide stretchers, weights, biting, sucking, and just general abuse and pleasure.

What does this all mean to you? _____

Safe sex is open to a variety of interpretations.

How and what do you suck, lick, and tongue? _____

At what point do you need to have a condom used? _____

Will you lick pre-cum? _____
Rim a clean ass? _____
Kiss on the mouth? _____
Drink piss? _____
Take cum in the mouth? _____
To what extent do you use drugs?
Alcohol _____
Dope _____
Poppers _____

4. I will accept discipline willingly, knowing that my Master is in control and has more wisdom, knowledge, and experience than I in these matters.

5. I will remain thankful for my Master's attention —whether it be painful or pleasurable — and will thank him for such attention as appropriate.

Expectations and Regulations Concerning Voluntary Servitude

(Please note that you're welcome to copy this and use it, but please let your friends know you got it from *The Compleat Slave* by Jack Rinella.)

This document delineates the ramifications of surrendering one's life to mastery.

PREREQUISITES

The onset of slavery begins once several conditions have been met. As shown here, they are *sine qua non*, that is without them, Voluntary Servitude cannot proceed.

1. The slave will demonstrate full knowledge of the ramifications of surrender and will accept the conditions of such without reservation or hesitation. It must be perfectly clear to both parties that it is a free, informed, and adult choice to enter into the relationship of voluntary servitude (henceforth referred to as "slavery"). Submission to this lifestyle under the dominance and control of a master must be a free choice entered into by the slave without coercion or deceit.
2. The master will do his best to clarify the meaning, implications, and impact of slavery. On the slave's part, he must be willing to allow full knowledge of his person to his master. This demands an openness and intimacy on the slave's part so that control over him can be complete, informed, and in the best interests of the master.
3. There needs to be a trial period of slavery to ensure full understanding of the master's conditions, requirements, and expectations. The master will use this trial time to evaluate at close range the slave's appropriateness, motivations, and attitude.
4. Throughout the slave's subjugation, he will demonstrate the fol-

lowing characteristics:

- An eagerness to learn what is expected of him as slave and to fulfill those expectations.
- An attitude that demonstrates the need and desire to be dominated.
- A response to the master's commands, suggestions, and desires that proves his desire to please, serve, and live in a way that will meet the master's conditions.

5.The master will provide for the slave's needs out of the slave's present and future resources and income. This provision will be according to the master's allocation, not the slave's.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The rules of service may be summarized by four core statements defining the slave's position:

- 1.Respect at all times.
- 2.Surrender of physical control over all parts of the slave's body.
- 3.The acceptance of discipline without complaint or resistance.
- 4.The attitude of thankfulness for whatever attention is bestowed by the master.

The following pages expand these rules and apply them to the definition of a complete lifestyle.

THE MASTER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1.He will respect the slave's need to fulfill certain obligations inherent in life, e.g., issues of health, nutrition, family obligations, occupation, finances, etc. Once slavery is begun, decisions in matters such as these will be made by the master, not by the slave. For obvious reasons, they may have the appearance of being the slave's decisions.

Since the slave has chosen to be controlled, the master's decisions will be the slave's decisions in a very real (albeit indirect) way. As necessary, the master may include the slave in the decision-making process, but only with the recognition that the slave's role will be one of advice, not direction, nor will it involve the slave in

reclaiming decision-making authority for himself, except when specifically granted by the master.

2. Once the slave is the master's property, the master will be responsible to keep him as healthy as possible. The master will want to keep his property at full value and so will not command or treat the slave in a way that jeopardizes or diminishes his value. A healthy slave is a valuable one.

THE RAMIFICATIONS OF SLAVERY

Appearance

The slave will look as most pleases the master in matters of grooming, dress, decorum, manners, and outward demeanor.

Behavior Modification

The master will use, and the slave will assent to the use of behavior modification techniques. Once the slave is under the master's control, certain changes in the slave's behavior may be required so that the slave conforms more exactly to the master's will.

Techniques will include discipline, deprivation, instruction, positive reinforcement, encouragement, incentives, isolation, and reward.

Conflict

The slave will submit to the master's judgment in the (likely) event that there arises conflict between them. In the case of conflict, the slave can expect the application of behavior modification, discipline, dialogue, and honesty.

Continued Ownership

The termination of the master's ownership of the slave will be at the master's pleasure, and in light of the slave's constitutional rights (see below). The master's continued ownership of the slave will be at the master's pleasure and the master reserves the right to transfer the slave's ownership to another person either temporarily or permanently at the master's discretion.

Dialogue

The master will provide the slave with opportunities to express the slave's needs and discuss the slave's concerns. The master will listen to the slave, endeavoring to teach him, and as appropriate, help the slave understand the master's actions. There will be the opportunity for questioning and discussion, always, though, in the context that the master is the decision maker and the master alone holds final say.

The master's willingness to inform the slave and help the slave understand is at the master's discretion. The slave has no need to understand, unless the master perceives that such understanding will improve the slave's worth and service to him.

Discipline

As stated above the slave will receive discipline for the master's pleasure and the slave's training. The master will teach the slave to accept it willingly and totally. The slave will be open to it and will find the inner strength and commitment to transform the negative aspects of discipline (pain, humiliation, discomfort, trauma, etc.) into a positive viewpoint and, eventually, as a natural, expected, and welcome aspect of the slave's submission.

Discipline will not be administered in such a way as to injure the slave nor decrease the slave's value. It will be an integral part of the slave's lifestyle, according to the master's direction and will.

The master will use hands, paddles, belts, cat-o-nine tails, brushes, confinement, bondage, deprivation, or other means suitable to help the slave acquire and maintain appropriate attitudes and responses.

Duties

The slave will work as directed by the master in order to provide income for both himself and his master.

The slave will perform duties appropriate to the slave's schedule, health and capacity, such as housekeeping, volunteer work, errands, etc., in the service of his master.

There will be a published schedule of chores, responsibilities, and expectations, as determined by the master and subject to his supervision, control, and modification.

Emancipation

In respect for the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, the master recognizes that coercion is neither a viable nor legal means of enforcing the slave's submission. Hence the slave will be in a condition of Voluntary Servitude, that is, the slave's slavery depends upon the slave's recognition of his need to be dominated and owned. In fact, the slave's own will creates and maintains this slavery.

Fear, etc.

An important part of the slave's growth and development will be the elimination of blocks and/or hindrances to the slave's full service to the master's will. Characteristics such as fear, doubt, insecurity, and hesitancy will be eliminated by encouragement, training, discipline, and direct confrontation.

In this process, the slave will be stripped of all limits, excuses, inner restraint, superficiality, false modesty, and phobias. Instead, the slave will submit to the limits the master imposes upon the slave, with confidence in the master's ability to control the slave's life and actions.

It is expected that the degree of submission will be such that the slave will rely on the master without hesitation or reserve, knowing that all justifiable and necessary limits will be kept by the master in light of the master's protection of his property.

Finances

Upon entry into servitude, the slave will turn practical and actual (but not legal) control of his personal resources over to the master for administration.

Assets will remain the property of the slave. Nothing in this section is meant to infer that the master is using the relationship for his own self-aggrandizement. Similarly, this is not a "free ride" for the slave.

The master will administer the slave's finances in such a way as to increase their value and provide for the slave's present and future needs (see section on the master's RESPONSIBILITIES).

The slave will support himself and provide for the master's pleasure and prosperity. The master will not accept the role of providing for the slave — as that would, in fact, make him the slave's slave, a role the master is not willing to accept. As the master's property, the slave will not be allowed to become a drain on the master's finances, but rather an asset to them.

Honesty

The slave will be open, frank, and honest in his conversation and relationship with the master. Any breach of this confidence will invoke the use of discipline.

Housing

The slave will live in the domicile of his master's choosing, either in the master's home or in close proximity to it, as the master sees fit. It will be open to the master's inspection and use at all times. The slave will respect the master's space as private and the slave's presence in it as one of slave and servant, performing such duties as ordered at the time and in the manner so commanded.

The type and location of the slave's place of residence shall be according to the master's assignment and within the range of the master's allocation of the slave's resources.

Sexual Behavior

It is understood that sexual intimacy will be part of the master/slave relationship. It will be conducted at all times as directed by the master's will and pleasure. The slave's sexual activity will be under the master's control. It is recognized that the objective of the slave's submission is the master's pleasure, not the slave's, though the slave may find his duties in this area pleasurable.

At all times, the slave will adhere to the practice of safe sex, as defined by the master.

Social Life

At the master's discretion, the slave will be given the opportunity to experience a social life outside of the master's supervision, though any absences from the master's service will be with the master's prior approval.

The master will expect and encourage the slave to develop other friendships, interests, and relationships. The only qualification of this is that they will not compete for the master's attention or time.

As the master desires and instructs, the slave will be made to treat others as the slave's master pro tem. Likewise, the slave will be expected to

assist the master in the instruction, domination, and pleasurable use of other slaves. The master does not expect the slave to take a role of domination, but rather one of facilitation.

INSUMMARY

This, then describes the slave's servitude, though it by no means fully describes the actual ramifications of the slave's submission. How it is lived out actually will be shown by time, the master's decisions, and the slave's submission.

A short afterword:

Publishing, like life, has a time-table all its own. No clock, not even an author's, ever stops and waits. What you read in these pages is true, even if I have to add that it was true *at the time of its original writing*.

Master Lynn and I have now been friends for almost as long as we were Master and slave. My lover relationship with Michael ended after six years but is certainly not forgotten. Patrick, after nearly six years, is still my devoted and adoring 24/7.

Friends come and go, and new friends, new seekers, and new applicants do the same. In all of this, life, and SM goes on.

About the Author

Jack Rinella, author of *The Master's Manual*, is a freelance writer, computer professional, and college instructor. His company, Rinella Internet Services hosts his web site at "<http://www.Leatherviews.com>."

Born in upstate New York of Italian-American parents, he's been a high school and college teacher, a drug rehabilitation counselor, a cook, a computer salesman, a Catholic seminarian, a Pentecostal minister, an advertising copywriter, and a graphic designer, and he has done stints at printing, publishing, telemarketing, head-hunting, and computer consulting. He lives on the North side of Chicago where he passes the time writing, cruising, and falling in love whenever he can. You can contact Jack by e-mail at mrjackr@Leathermail.com.

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The Compleat Slave

In this highly anticipated followup to **The Master's Manual**, author Jack Rinella continues his in-depth exploration and discussion of Dominant/submissive relationships with his latest book, **The Compleat Slave**. This informative overview of the leather scene features Rinella's guidelines, tips, and personal experiences in creating safe and sane Master/slave relationships. Whether you are a novice D/s player or an experienced Master or slave, this insightful and forthright volume will prove to be a great read and a valuable reference guide.



Jack Rinella is a freelance writer and columnist for several regional and national publications. His first book, **The Master's Manual**, has become a classic leather "how-to" book. Jack brings over 17 years of life experience to this subject. He currently lives in Chicago.



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